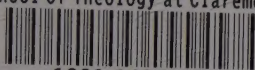


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THE WAR AND THE FAITH

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THE WAR AND THE FAITH

BY THE REV.

CHARLES BROWN, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "LIGHT AND LIFE"
"THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES" ETC.

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THE WAR AND THE FAITH



I

WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

“But the end of all things is at hand : be ye therefore of sound mind and be sober unto prayer.”—1 PET. iv. 7, R.V.

THIS is the comment of the Apostle Peter on the great and stirring times in which he was living and his inspired counsel to Christian people as to their behaviour and deportment. Things were trembling on the verge of some great convulsion. The air was laden with the presage of the great events of world-wide significance—events which must have seemed to many as the end of all things. For the thing that was about to happen was the destruction of the ancient proud city of Jerusalem whose people had been blind and deaf to every sign and voice of warning. Her walls would be battered and razed to the

ground. Her houses and palaces would be burned with fire, and the ancient ecclesiastical system with its elaborate sacrifices which centred in the glorious Temple would be for ever shattered and the splendid Temple itself become a heap of ruins never to be restored. Apart from any other considerations such as the literal end of the world, it might well seem to a devout Jew that the destruction of Jerusalem, the passing away of the dispensation which of old had been ordained by God, would be indeed the end of all things. Everything was thrown into the melting-pot, and a new world was being made before the eyes of men. Nothing for the moment was stable.

No one save a person who is hopelessly blind and insensate can question or doubt for a moment that we are living in great times—perhaps the most eventful times in the history of England or of Europe. We talk about great and stirring times of the past, and sometimes half wish that we had lived in them. Probably the greatest time of all is at our doors now. Probably more books will be written about the history of these times than about any other. People who are young now and who live through these times will tell of them to their children and their grandchildren with thrilling wonder. The children of future

generations will study these times. They will be a great landmark in the history of Europe. The times of the greatest and most bloody war in the history of the world, of the titanic struggle in which almost the whole world was engaged, when the flower of the youth of all England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales gave up their avocations and went on military service ; when from all our colonies and dependencies, distant and near, men came to fight for the Empire and for what they believed to be a sacred and holy cause. The war that changed the map of Europe and the destinies of nations and empires. The war of unparalleled devastation and slaughter, of revolting cruelties and barbarities, that caused innumerable broken hearts and desolate homes. May we not hope and pray that for scores of generations it may be written of as the war that put an end for ever to aggressive militarism, the war that ended war, that sickened people with its horrors and cruelties, that revealed its own insanity and drove nations to a saner and more effective way of settling their disputes ? However that may be, let us not fail to realise that we need not sigh for great days ; we are in them—great and crucial days ; and the question of vital importance is how we Christian people conduct ourselves. That is what our grandchildren will ask. How did Great Britain

behave in the hour of her supreme crisis, and how did the Church behave? A prayer that we all need to offer is that we may have understanding of our times, all of us. Not merely politicians and Christian ministers—they have their responsibility, and a very grave one it is—but we each one of us have our individual responsibility which we cannot devolve. You must not merely expect to be led, you must not complain of what the minister or the politician says or does not say. The question is, What do you say? Are you trying to understand this strange new world into which we are plunged by the diplomatists and the war-mongers of our times? Are you bearing your part in it, sharing the burden of it?

What are the times, and what is our part? "*The end of all things is at hand.*" I suppose that seems literally and absolutely true to some people—that we are really in the last days of the world's history, of the race, and the life of man upon the globe. There are students of prophecy—decreasing in number, doubtless—who say so. They go so far as to say dogmatically that these days are literally foretold in the Old Testament; that Germany is identical with Assyria. I have had a book sent to me by the author, entitled *How the War will End*, in which everything, it is stated,

even Mr. Asquith's speech in the British House of Commons, is foretold in the prophecies of Isaiah.

What one reflects is this, that there has never been a convulsion, or an earthquake, or a war, or an apostasy, but this type of person has emerged and prophesied the almost immediate end of the world. I remember when I was a child a book that was widely read among Christian people called *The Approaching End of the Age*, by a man of great influence in evangelical circles, which I suppose sought to prove that the end was very imminent ; and one would pay greater attention to these people, many of whom are eminent in character and quite honest in intention, but that their predictions have been so often falsified, and one is driven back upon the words of Christ concerning this : " It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put within His own power," and " Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not even the Son." Personally, I give my conviction for what it is worth. I do not believe we are in the last days of this world's history. I do not believe the world is going to end like this. I believe this dark night in which we are at the moment, this great and terrible time, when the heart is wrung with suspense and agony and

horror, is a dark night that trembles to the dawn of a new day, a new beginning in the history of the nations. A new and brighter day, a day of new conceptions of the functions of a State and the relation of countries to each other. That we shall emerge from the present time having learnt some lessons which will be burnt as with fire upon the mind and memory of the peoples of the earth.

Perhaps the times in which we are may teach us that there is more than one interpretation of the mysterious sayings of Christ in which doubtless the destruction of Jerusalem is mixed up with the end of the world. Perhaps, if I may say so, the world has many ends and many new beginnings—many a day which is the day of the Lord ; many an hour when the Son of Man comes as a thief in the night ; many a time in the long, long course of the history of the race when things are dissolved and the elements are melted with fervent heat and there emerges a new heaven, a new conception of God and of His character and will in the minds of men. And a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness. A new conception of life—the materialistic conception, the military ideal, the conception that sees the highest good in physical comforts and pleasures and indulgences, is burned up in

the furnace of war and disaster, and a new people cleansed and transfigured comes out of the fire.

Did not many people feel in the month of August in the year of our Lord 1914, and have not many people felt since, as if the end of all things was at hand ? Suddenly—like a bolt from the blue, or like a thief in the night—the trouble was upon us. There came an end at once to certain relationships. They were snapped like a thread. There came an end to proposed plans. They fell in ruins about the ears of their proposers. There came a sudden end to certain trades and occupations, and an equally sudden end to many a man's possessions. And the word "security" has become a term of satire as applied to many a man's possessions. Nothing is more insecure, and often the document is not worth the paper it is written on. Things that seemed to be of great value a few months ago are worth nothing, and it is impossible to say what some stocks and shares will be worth when this war is over.

Already this great and terrible day has been the end of many a bright and gifted life, of many a home, of many a dream of domestic happiness and bliss. Do what you will, levy what indemnity you will on the vanquished

nation, for millions of people life can never be the same again ; nothing can bring back what has been destroyed. The irreparable loss has fallen. The most cherished possession is gone. However glorious a victory there may be, life for many will be maimed and crippled and bereft to its end. The most solid foundations have been shaken and will be shaken yet. Nobody can foresee what will be shaken or what ended. Perhaps some precious things. Pray God that Cæsarism may be ended, that despotic and menacing militarism may be destroyed, that freedom and self-government and a lasting league of peace may come, and that out of the shattered ruins there may be built up a cleaner and nobler edifice of national and international and individual life on the part of the nations of Europe. Meanwhile some words of Paul come to me now—strangely applicable, with a little alteration, to these times: "It remains that those which have wives—or sons—be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away."

What is the Apostle's counsel? It seems peculiarly appropriate to these times. "Be ye "

—Christian people—"of sound mind." You may confess with sadness that Christian people have not always been of sound mind in times of national crisis. They have indulged, as I have suggested, in fanciful and uninspired predictions before now. They have traced the calamity to its wrong source before now. Or they have held aloof from all national affairs, which is perhaps the most unsound attitude of all. You know what it is to be sound—it is opposed to that which is damaged, injured, warped, perverted, or tainted and diseased.

Really the exhortation of the text as applied to the present time urges on us the responsibility of forming a sound judgment on the present situation, and sound means true, accurate, and wholesome—an unbiased and untainted judgment, unbiased by passion and untainted by hatred, malice, or soft sentiment. It is so easy to think unchristianly at the present time both of ourselves and of Germany, and you have no right to think unchristianly of the very worst or the best.

An unsound mind may be a mind inflamed and swollen with colossal vanity, which may have been the disease from which both Germany and England have suffered. An unsound mind, on the other hand, may be morbid, it may be

sickly and sentimental. It may be dissolved, therefore, in useless and melancholy tears of grief and despondency. Or it may be lacking in a sense of justice, and be disposed to purchase peace at any price without seeing that justice is done and reparation made to wickedly injured people. An unsound mind will be likely to make an unsound peace through morbid fear of pain. "Be ye therefore of sound mind." Labour to get and cultivate a sane and sensible, a just and righteous, a true and unbiased view of the present awful and critical situation.

And be sober unto prayer.—The difficulty of accurately rendering this last phrase and the large liberty that may be legitimately taken with it is illustrated in the varied translation of different versions. "Be temperate that you may give yourselves to prayer," says Dr. Weymouth. "Keep cool and pray," says Dr. James Moffatt, very inadequately. Dr. Weymouth suggests by his rendering that intemperance of spirit or habit will prevent the exercise of prayer, and you will agree that it does. To be sober is, for one thing, to avoid exaggeration. It is to face facts as they are and not to colour them. It is to have yourself and your emotions well in hand. It by no means indicates that you are not to have passion—but you are to have it

under strict control. For passion, like fire, is a good servant, but a bad master.

Its present application may well be that we should avoid losing our heads or our feet, and being carried away either by undue elation or depression. Then a faithful rendering of the text would be that our sound-mindedness and our steadiness should look towards God. The real meaning of the sentence is that soundness of mind and sobriety are to be linked on to prayer, and while one would not debar Dr. Weymouth's translation—"Be thus in order that you may give yourselves to prayer"—I would claim the right to the opposite rendering. Give yourselves to prayer in order that you may be calm of mind and sober.

Anyhow, one is perfectly certain that the need of the hour is that the Church should give herself to prayer. Let no one question or doubt the value of it. People are burning to help just now, and I can assure you it is very difficult to help effectively. There is a vast amount of activity. Some of it is running to waste, and is as the rattle of a mill that grinds nothing.

It is just possible that some do not see the value of prayer, and that others cannot calm the tumult of their minds sufficiently to pray.

But be sure that nothing is more necessary on the part of Christian people than the continuous attitude of prayer. It will keep your patriotism pure and strong. It will develop and strengthen the power of endurance. It will cleanse your passion of unworthy elements ; *your intercession for your country will be of unspeakable service to your country*, and out of your prayer will come light on the pathways of service.

It is the prayerful attitude that discovers and discerns the will of God. Did you see in one of the papers that a company of our soldiers—I believe belonging to an Irish regiment—before going into action bowed in prayer for a few moments, commending themselves in that solemn hour soul and body to the keeping of Almighty God ? There is too little of that in the Army, and too little of it in the nation. It is the Church's business. The Church should be the abode of prayer. May God pour out upon us abundantly the spirit of supplication. That is not all that the Apostle says, and there is no reason why I should stop when I do save that time bids me. "Above all, have fervent love among yourselves," follows the text—love for the poor, the distressed, the suffering, those whose hearts are breaking ; love which always means the tender heart and the sensitive soul. For the

man who is found in prayer and in love is ready for anything, living or dying—for stirring or calm times, for the end of the world and the coming of the Lord. This spirit may God give and preserve to us in these great times, that we may not fail to play a worthy part therein.

Grant, O Lord, to us who believe in Thee, a steady and sober mind. Save us from exaggerating either success or failure, defeat or triumph. From false assurance and from despair or panic we pray to be kept. Help us to believe that Thou livest and reignest, and in all times of tumult and peril keep our hearts tranquil and brave, trusting in Thee. May our prayers ever keep open the way of communication between our souls and Thee, and prove also channels of blessing to others. Make us to know that nothing in this world or the next can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

II

PEACEMAKERS

"Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God."—MATT. V. 9.

I HOPE no one will consider this subject ill-timed or incongruous. It may seem to some to be almost satirical to be talking of peace just now, and to be quoting this great saying of our Lord and other kindred sayings. To some people, indeed, it would be more, and worse than satirical. It would seem to be almost treasonable. They say we must not think or speak of peace at the present moment.

What I would venture to say is that to millions of people in Great Britain, and I am quite sure in Germany, Peace never looked so fair and gracious and so greatly to be desired and longed for as at this moment. Oh what a priceless boon it would be to strained and breaking hearts, and with what shouts and acclamations

its advent would be welcomed so it were honourable and just !

For my own part, I refuse to admit that this is not the time to speak of peace or to think of it or to pray and work for it. We know it is bound to come. We know that the present truly awful condition of things cannot last. The enormous sacrifice and waste of human blood and treasure, the colossal scale on which destruction and slaughter are proceeding, cannot continue. It is becoming intolerable.

Do let it be understood that many of us are more determined pacifists than we ever were—that we hate this way of settling national disputes. The stories we read, such as that written by a young midshipman to his father of the sinking of the German battleship *Blücher*, fill us with horror as the scenes filled the lad who described them. Is not every day a day of tortured suspense for many, and every story of the war read with hearts that almost stand still from beating in their agony of anxiety ?

Yet you know from experience that the alternative to the sinking of the *Blücher* would not merely be the sinking of a British man-of-war, but the shelling of undefended towns and the killing of non-combatants, including women and babes. And we know in our own hearts

that for the Allies to cry Halt now, to break off where they are, to say, No more people shall be slain, would not mean an abiding peace. It would just mean—on the contrary—the building of a bridge over the roaring torrent which would never bear the weight of the people ordered to cross it. It would soon break down, and a worse embroilment would ensue.

I must confess that I long with an unspeakable longing for the impossible just now—and yet one feels it ought not to be impossible—that some person or persons might emerge somewhere in the world and dictate righteous terms of peace, to say that this horrid slaughter of men who do not want to fight, and who have no quarrel with each other, shall cease. And that it may cease, right must be done. There, my friends, is the trouble. You have no one to arbitrate and judge among the nations, no one to sift carefully all the evidence, to investigate dispassionately or with a pure passion, to know the truth. No one to go right down to the roots of things; to say, This is right, and Germany must do it, or Great Britain must do it, or France must concede it. On the contrary, you have philosophers declaring that the nation is a law to itself; that there is no power above the State—which is, of course, a denial of God;

that morality and truth and humaneness must be sacrificed to the exigencies of political or military necessity; that the nation which is strong enough to crush another and rule over it has a perfect right to do so. And to submit to that, to allow that spirit embodied to bestride the world, would not be to have peace. To concede the government of the greater part of the world to the power that has wrecked and devastated Belgium, and has shown its cruel and filthy hand in its treatment of women and children in crimes that cry aloud to Heaven, would not be to have peace. You might have outward stillness as of those who had been overpowered and stifled, but you would have a hot and bitter and resentful heart within, and you would feel that physical death by shell or drowning would be infinitely preferable to life on those conditions.

Then who is the peacemaker? and how can we be peacemakers to-day? Must he not be a man who understands peace? Can a man make anything—peace or anything else—without understanding the true nature of that which he makes? The man who will make peace must know what a pure and wholesome and altogether lovely thing, right down to the roots of it, true peace is. The man who really builds

the Temple of Peace will want a solid foundation. He will dig down for it. He will be willing to take no end of trouble, to remove all manner of rubbish, to drive in his piles or to lay his concrete; and while he is about his job he will often appear to be making confusion and disturbance rather than peace.

The real peacemaker is not just amiability personified, just as true peace is not organised amiability and pleasantness. That may be very superficial. The true peacemaker is not the person who goes about smiling at everything, urging everybody to be content with things as they are, and that you must not disturb things or people or make any unpleasantness, or complain of anything, however rotten and wrong it may be.

The true peacemaker is not that feeble kind of creature whom it is not worth while to object to, who will never create or face a storm, however corrupt and flagrantly wrong things may be, who hushes things up and leaves them alone in their badness. That may be sheer cowardice or laziness, a disinclination to bear trouble or to suffer any inconvenience. And we all know too well that that is often simply shirking a difficulty, and that it is sowing the seeds of further trouble, or allowing some mischief so firmly to

root and entrench itself that it will plague people who come after you for a generation. You really are not making peace that way, because what you are making depends on your ultimate and not on your temporary object. We have peace to-day in some directions because the men who went before us, and prepared the way, were not afraid of the storm or of war, and in other directions people may have war in the time to come because we were too fond of ourselves, and our own ease and comfort, to face the strife and the disturbance.

When I want the pattern of the peacemaker I look to Jesus Christ, the Lord and King of men, a part of whose regal law my text is, and you may say with perfect reverence that He did not leave things alone ; that if He had been merely offenceless in the sight of men, smiling amiably on all their doings, never setting Himself against their customs or their spirit, never speaking the stern word or the indignant word or the word of severe condemnation, the crown of thorns and the cross of shame would never have been His. The world would not have thought it worth while to put Him to death, and, with the uttermost reverence be it said, He would never have been the Saviour of mankind. The evils of the world that were eating away its life would have

remained to plague and ultimately to destroy the race.

And there would have been no martyrs among the apostles.

The true peacemaker is a person who is not afraid of strife, nor of the wrath or hatred of men. He loves peace so well that he will face anything to secure it as an infinite blessing, not for himself but for others.

He is the man to whom it is perfectly clear—ought it not to be clear to all of us?—that the basis of peace must be righteousness, justice, cleanness, truth? Is it not clear to us that there ought not to be peace while wrong obtains, that we should never try to get peace or accept it by compromising with wrong? Does it not appear to us as an unmistakable part of the will of God that we should not make terms with any kind of wrong, as injustice and tyranny and unfaithfulness and negligence, nor wink at it, nor agree to be silent about it, for the sake of peace? Twice over in the prophecies of Isaiah the affirmation comes as the declaration of the living and holy God, "There is no peace to the wicked." He declares also that peace is the work of righteousness, and St. James in the New Testament declares that the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable; and may not that be

taken to mean that in order to have true peace you must have purity? Are there not situations and circumstances in which you may say that you must have an explosion before you can have peace? or if that is too violent a figure, that you need a storm to clear the air? The atmosphere is altogether unhealthy. So the peacemaker is the man who dares things, who makes ventures, who interferes, who declares these things shall not be, and these other things shall not continue. He is the man described in Blake's familiar lines:

we
mental
 "I will not cease from ~~mortal~~ strife,
 Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
 Till I have built Jerusalem
 In England's green and pleasant land."

I always think of Nehemiah as a great peacemaker in the Old Testament. He undertook the great venture of building the wall of Jerusalem that it might have peace; and when evil-minded men, who throve on the weaknesses of Jerusalem, would have hindered by force that work of the Lord, he armed his builders with swords and coats of mail, all still in the interests of peace.

The peacemaker is a man who has thoughts and purposes of peace in his heart; who loves peace and seeks it and pursues it; who will

go through fire and water to win it ; who will make sacrifices and shed his blood to secure it ; who hates strife, but who will submit to it and engage in it for the sake of procuring the conditions in which the plant of peace may grow. He is a man who, in the words of one of the Messianic psalms, loves righteousness and hates iniquity ; who has no selfish ends to serve ; who never fights for his own hand or for the sake of fighting ; who never bears malice nor nurses the fires of envy or greed or revenge ; who will love a man even while he hates his ways, and will forgive at the first sign of repentance ; who is chivalrous and magnanimous and generous and gracious ; who, in the words of this familiar verse, is a son of God and therefore like Him.

My brethren, there is abundant and sore need of the peacemakers in the world to-day, and there will be an enormous work for them to do in the days that lie before us.

For we may not hide from ourselves the sorrowful fact that there are men in all lands who delight in war ; who have vested interests in strife ; whose diabolical business it is to light its fires and to fan its flames ; who, in vulgar phrase, are always wanting to have a smack at somebody, to master and humiliate and crow over somebody ; who really delight to give pain ; whose words are

drawn swords. They are the children of the devil, if ever men are, thriving on the hatreds of men. Pray God to be delivered from their evil heart, to dry up in your own heart to-day the foul and bitter spring of malice and ill-will and revenge.

One of the most difficult things to be done in the whole history of humanity will be to bring peace out of the present imbroglio, a real and permanent peace that will leave no rankling resentment behind.

It is not Lord Kitchener's job nor General Joffre's. It will not be secured merely by the victory of the Allies, which we all hope and pray for and which we believe must be a prelude to peace. It will need *men of peace and goodwill to make it*, men with large hearts and a keen sense of justice, men who—I speak advisedly—love justice and righteousness and truth and equity even more than they love their own country. May I not say it will need men who genuinely fear God and seek His will above all and are governed by His Spirit?

Such men may God raise up and multiply among us and among all the nations!

Such men and women may God make of us all, men and women who love what is right and seek it with all their hearts! And suffer this

last word, let it remain with you. The men who make peace must have peace in their own hearts, and the root and spring of peace. The fountain and guarantee of it is the submission of the will of man to the will of God—putting the government on the shoulder of the Prince of Peace and bringing the whole realm of life under His Almighty sway.

O Thou who art the God of Peace, help us all to be men of peace and goodwill. May we ever be among those who seek peace and pursue it. Help us to seek peace by all means. And when there is no other way to peace but that of strife and suffering, make us willing to take the path and brave to walk therein. Save us from evil thoughts of malice and revenge, we beseech Thee. Arm us with the armour of righteousness and purity. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

III

THE GREATEST WAR

“ For I delight in the law of God after the inward man : but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.”—ROM. vii. 22-23.

YOU may call the conflict described in this passage as the greatest war. The word warring indicates not a battle but a campaign—a long-drawn-out and stubbornly contested war ; and the word captivity in verse 23 means not the ordinary captivity, but captivity in war. The Apostle who writes the passage goes into the deep places of his own experience and that of others. He uncovers his inner life for the sake of other people, and shows us in one revealing flash that he, the great and holy Apostle, the mighty spiritual genius, the greatest saint in history, is a man of like passions with ourselves. He reads his own heart for our encouragement. He recounts his own struggles and shows us at a glance out of what difficult and almost desperate

conditions his massive and splendid character was achieved ; that sainthood was no second nature to him, but that it was attained through terrific struggle. Has not the humblest soul among us felt like this : " To me who would do good evil is present " ? Does he not put himself side by side with the weakest of us when he declares, " To will is present with me, but the power to do that which is right is not " ? Does he not win your heart by his lowliness and his frank confession when he says, " The good that I would I do not, and the evil that I would not that I do " ? When you are inclined to give up in this topsy-turvy world and say, " It is at any rate no use for *me* to attempt the saintly life," will you not read St. Paul and take courage ?

" He is sitting for his own likeness here," Professor Sanday says, his own spiritual likeness, and whoever does that is certain to draw the portrait of other people, for there is nobody absolutely singular in his own spiritual experiences. You see where he was and what his experience was. The law of God had found him out and had condemned his life and awakened his conscience within him. It revealed to him what he ought to be, and he rose up to strive after it. He acclaimed the ideal and said, It shall be the real. But there were adversaries, and they were

in himself, in his own nature. They arose and said, "Thou shalt not." And the law that had illumined and condemned him did not help him in the struggle. He frankly admits that he had been beaten back and that he had failed; and he did not say, The failure does not matter—I can go on with my Christian work. He seemed to say, The battle within must first be fought. Sin must be conquered there before it can be conquered outside. The instrument must be fitted before it can do the work of the Lord. And he had been apparently nearly in despair about himself. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I find a different law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity."

Begin with the first sentence. Be quite honest with it, and say at once that it places the holy Apostle not side by side with us but beyond us. Perhaps the trouble at the moment with some of us is that we do not *delight* in the law of God after the inward man. Indeed a man has got some way when he can honestly say that, and there is something to rejoice over. For there are plenty of people who do not. For what is the law of God as interpreted and exemplified by Jesus Christ our Lord? The law of love, purity, forgiveness, compassion, absolute right-

eousness, self-sacrifice. Does everybody delight in that ?

Is there a delight in pure goodness in the heart of our modern civilisation ? In commerce, politics, our homes, our schools, are there not to be found people who secretly love and practise, and sometimes openly practise, the things that are sharply opposed to the law of God even as there were people who hated and persecuted and would gladly have killed Paul ?

Are there not people whose lives are a complete reversal of the apostolic injunction, who abhor that which is good and cleave to that which is evil ? Are there not to be found in literature and on the stage, and to be met with in certain circles, people who hold up what is pure and true to ridicule and scorn, and do we all cherish the love of it in our heart ? Have we not something to rejoice over exceedingly if we can say honestly this first sentence ?

The second thing to be noted is that even this is not a condition to be satisfied with, to rest contented in. Here is what this spiritual genius with his illumined insight says : " I delight in the law of God, *but*——" That is, there is something that mars his delight, that spoils his joy. He is seriously dissatisfied. You need not think that he is depreciating the worth of this inward

condition. Rather he is holding it at its true value. He sees how imperfect it is, how baffled he is with it, how incapable he is of translating it into daily practice. That is the trouble. I venture to suggest that that is where some of us are, and that we should take the Pauline attitude. *Not the opposite attitude*, which some would take, as thus: "True, I do not keep the law of God, I am brought into captivity to sin, but I delight in the law of God." You should never lose sight of that. When a man goes wrong against his better self, when like Peter he falls and denies his Lord and yet loves, don't lose sight of it. Don't say the man is all bad. Realise the conflict. Do not remember only what is done, but what is resisted and what the temptation was. But I implore you in God's name do not rest satisfied with that condition. Paul did not. There ought to be some way out of it. A man ought not to be for ever down in that trough, loving the good and unable to reach it, always beaten back, desiring it and never getting it, always the best in him defeated.

Do not be satisfied with a defeated love of the good, to let a ramping passion rule your life. If you are, I venture to say the love itself will in time be destroyed. I do not believe that our life ought to be a humiliating moral failure.

That there should be sap in the tree but that it should never issue in fruit, or that there should be grace in the heart which can never get itself translated into actual achievement—there must be some way better than that. *What is the way?*

Well, to begin with, I commend to you Paul's dissatisfaction. What he saw with that clear-sighted vision of his was that the law of God was given him not to consent to and admire but to do, and he had not done it. He had a glowing heart towards it and then deep distress that he had not kept it; do not try to lose that distress.

Probably most people nowadays would be puzzled at his distress of mind. It is not a feature of our modern Christian life; we are easily satisfied with ourselves. If anybody half as good as Paul amongst us were distressed about his spiritual failure we should probably say he was much too introspective. We should say he was run down, that he was far too gloomy; we should prescribe change of air; we should say that he wanted taking out of himself, that he was out of health, that he was thinking too much on religious matters and wanted some amusement or excitement.

It amazes us that a great soul like Paul should be distressed and depressed about his spiritual failures. He might very well be depressed about

other professedly Christian people and the careless and unspiritual lives and even the wicked lives that they were living, as indeed he was ; but a man loving Christ as he did, and doing good in so devoted a way, what need could there be for him to be dissatisfied and distressed ?

My friends, our lack of distress is no sign of our goodness. If we had half his goodness, half the burning fire of love and the passion for holiness that he had we would have some of his distress, for out of his distress grew his great and growingly greater character. You know that one of our perils is to be content with our emotions, with our admiration for what is good, and regarding that as a substitute for doing what is good. It is not the same thing. You may admire heroism and never do a heroic act. You may applaud heroism and be in your heart an arrant coward, and yet because you admire heroism you may be snared into thinking yourself a hero. You may weep at stories of distress and poverty and yet never deny yourself nor give up a pleasure or wear your dress a little longer or go without some cherished thing in order to share the work of relieving the distress. You may admire a thing and never really try to do it, and by and by come to admire yourself for admiring it.

There are ~~plenty of~~ people who admire the

character and the teachings of Christ who never make a strong and solid effort to obey and imitate Him. They frame portions of the Sermon on the Mount and hang them up in their bedrooms, but they never think of carrying them out in daily life. They see the difficulty as Paul saw it. They say the thing is impossible. They say you ought to be sorry, of course, for not having done the right, and they come to regard a superficial sorrow—a weekly or daily confession that they have left undone the things they ought to have done—as equivalent to having really done them. They say we cannot be expected, with our passions and our temptations and our surroundings, to keep the law of God. So it is of no use to worry ; nobody does it. So we heal the hurt slightly, and as one of the old Puritans put it in days less polite than our own, we try to cure the colic by brushing our clothes.

Well, it was not Paul's way, and he knew. The trouble with him was that he knew that he was expected to keep the law of God. It was right and good—not the ceremonial law, but the moral law ; not the law of the Old Testament merely, but the law of Christ. And he knew that he had not kept it, and it condemned him. He knew, what everybody knows, that the law of Christ was far higher and purer and more exacting than

the law of Moses. That old law forbade men to kill ; He forbade the hatred and anger that would kill if it dared. Moses forbade adultery ; He forbade even a lustful thought. The old law forbade a false oath ; He required men to be so truthful in ordinary speech that an oath should be unnecessary. The ancient law told a man to love his neighbour ; Jesus told him to love his enemy.

No one can read the New Testament without seeing that the one thing that our Lord intended men to do with His great law and commandments was to *keep them*. In words ever memorable He declares that not the men who call Him Lord, but those who do God's will, will enter the Kingdom. He predicts the most complete disaster for those who know His words and fail to do them ; and there was Paul's distress, and it might much more be yours and mine. Because, note, there is a way out of it. God has not only sent a law, He has sent His Son ; and He is not only a lawgiver. If He were only that—if He had simply come to give us great laws and a great example, and to say, Under pain of penalty and everlasting loss, you must keep these and copy this, and there is no other way into the favour of God and eternal life—I dare to affirm that the Gospel would have been no Gospel at all to us.

It would simply have oppressed our spirit. It would have left us with a dead weight of guilt and impotence on our hearts which would have sunk us into despair.

Surely the very essence of the Gospel is, God loves you with an everlasting and unfathomable love. Jesus Christ came not to be a school-master and a lawgiver exacting and demanding, but a Saviour giving—giving everything, even His life; and by the gift of Himself for men and to men, living our life, facing our temptations, knowing our weakness and failure and still clinging to us, awaking love for Himself in our hearts. And love will carry us farther than anything beside.

The cry of the New Testament to men is, "Be ye reconciled to God." You have failed to keep God's law, but He has never failed or ceased to love you. You are more to God and more precious than any law can be, and the law is simply given to you in love. It is not something arbitrarily set up. It shows what God is and what you must aspire to be. And the Gospel is not only that Christ gives Himself *for* man, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God; it is also that He gives Himself *to* men. He wins your love that you may trust Him, and in your trust He bestows Himself upon you. According

to the original message of Christianity Jesus Christ is not a vanished greatness, but a present helper. The effect of weakness and inability, of the strength of carnal passion and of awful temptation, is not to drive us to despair, but rather to drive us back upon Him. He exists for our need. His power flows into the loving and trustful heart. He overcame. He not only delighted in the law of God, He did it; and the teaching of the New Testament as I understand it is not that His doing it is to be regarded as a substitute for my doing it, so that I need not attempt it, but that if I live in Him by faith and love He imparts His strength to me, enabling me. Paul did not say, "I can do nothing, and must give up and just cast myself on Christ." He said, "I can do all things," and "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory," "who always leadeth us in triumph." He said, "We are *more* than conquerors."

It would be passing strange indeed if God had given us a law that we could in no wise keep. It is not passing strange that by inbred and ingrained passion men render themselves incapable of keeping the law, and that God comes to them in their inability; not to lower the standard—He cannot do that, goodness is goodness for ever—but to say, "I will help you."

Christ delivers me from the guilt and sin and gives me strength to keep His law. In Him the personality of God is imparted to man.

The lesson, then, that we are to learn from this text is not that we are not to endeavour to keep the law—no, but that it is only through Christ that we can keep it. Our failure is due probably not to lack of endeavour, but to lack of fellowship. We are going without our Helper, and in the truest sense we are lost without Him. “Apart from Me ye can do nothing.” The whole secret of our power to do right lies in our whole-hearted acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord.

There is nothing so amazing in this world as the difference which that makes and the changes that take place when it becomes a fact—a real fact, not a far-off admiration of Jesus, but definite surrender to Him. I have been reading a little book recently called *Mending Men*. It consists mainly of the letters of a Black Country working-man to the superintendent of one of the adult schools through whom he was converted. And there is nothing more wonderful than the perfect transformation wrought in this man's life and in many others through the power of the Spirit of God. I read that book through as a simple confirmation of the teaching of the

New Testament, and I came to the unshaken conclusion that there is nothing that is good that the grace of God cannot enable a man to achieve, and no obstacle that is too stubborn to be broken down.

My message to men who have striven and failed and are down-hearted, or to men who have never had the faith to strive, is "The life of victory is for you," the life of complete triumph—not without many a fierce conflict, many a bitter struggle; but for the conflict there is armour, in the struggle there is an ally. The Spirit of God may dwell in man and fight through him. The way of victory, the only sure and certain way, is the giving up of every other trust and casting yourself without reservation upon the love and the might of Christ the Lord. Wherever that is done, He proves Himself to be the Saviour of men.

Our Father, help us to believe that it is possible for us to do Thy will, that the life of victory may be ours. Help us also to know that this can never be achieved in our own strength, but only in fellowship with Thy Son our Saviour, in Whom alone is our hope. *Amen.*

IV

NO MORE WAR

“ And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people ; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”—ISA. ii. 4.

THE thought of the national crisis is always with us, sleeping and waking, and we can no more escape it than we can escape our own shadow or the air we breathe. Moreover, there is the feeling that it is one's duty to find, if possible, some light of a Christian sort in this perplexing time, and, if he may, some guidance for others, and so one is driven upon a passage like this. A great passage, a great picture, of a world at peace—permanent peace ; war forsworn for ever ; the instruments of destruction and slaughter converted into implements of production and culture. A most daring dream of a time that is to be—the dream of an enthusiast, a young prophet who is lifting up his face from

the troubled earth to the quiet stars, and this is what he saw written there, or rather what he saw written in the decree and purpose of God.

I think some of us are so disappointed and distressed with the present condition of things that we have hardly the patience to listen to such a word as this. And perhaps there are others who would say, This is no time for dwelling on such prophecies ; whatever may be at other times, they are out of season just now.

What needs to be remembered is that the passage belongs to a time as disturbed and convulsive as our own. On a much smaller stage the military drama or tragedy was being enacted. The world of Isaiah's day had no idea of millions of men massed for battle, and of course no faintest idea of the monster and terrible engines of destruction which the genius of the twentieth century of the Christian era has invented ! War in ancient times had none of the dread aspects of to-day. But it was amid all the fever and restlessness of great military movements that Isaiah saw and dared to speak this word. You have only to think of what Jerusalem was, or of what your own time is, to see how great is this vision. No doubt verses 6 and 7 of this chapter refer to the alliance with Assyria which Ahaz made, and ch. iii. 8 shows the final result of

that alliance, and that verse was a far more daring thing for Isaiah to say than the words of my text. But here is the point: out of those conditions he dared to build this castle in the air, this model for the future. The contrast between his ideal and the actual was enough to make him sick, as the contrast between your actual and your ideal—your dream of Sunday and the actuality of Monday, your dream in your hour of devotion and resolve and the actual facts that you come down to—as great a contrast as was the Mount of God on which Moses held communion with the Most High and the scene which greeted him on his descent from the mountain, when he saw the people of the Lord, as he had thought them, in shameless nakedness giving themselves to the lewd indulgences of the heathen.

So you feel the contrast between the Christian ideal towards which you have been striving and the hard fact which you are up against every day, and which greets you every morning with your first waking thought. You cannot help feeling, as Isaiah could not help feeling, after all, how horribly wrong it all is, how it ought not to be—that while we are compelled to this present contest, and there is no other way at the moment and we must endure it for many months to come, yet it is horribly wrong, and we ought

never to have been compelled to it. And there is something terribly wrong in the system that compels it. Why should any nation be faced with the alternative that it must either embark on this dread course or be walked over and trodden down and destroyed as to its freedom and self-government? Do you not feel it to be horribly wrong that millions of men—think what a million means!—millions of men, the very flower of the nations' manhood, should be withdrawn from productive pursuits and be set to purely destructive work? That instead of building things of beauty, they should be shattering them; that instead of nourishing life, they should be destroying it? That murder should be legalised on the high seas, or in any spot on the earth where armed Briton or Russian or Frenchman meets German? Can you imagine anything like it being tolerated among *individuals* in any civilised community? Can you imagine any man allowed anywhere—because he stands over six feet and is proportionately strong and skilful—to beat his smaller neighbour to the ground, and to hold him there until he promises to cede a part of his property to him, or to pay him a large percentage of his earnings for the next twenty years or for ever? In the case of the individual the law steps in and forbids such tyranny. It

protects the physically weak ; it declares that he has as much right to life and property as the physically strong, and must be as free to go about his business in safety. It would put the man in prison and hang him who strode into this man's garden and house, and beat down his opposition, and killed his sons and his servants who opposed him, and burnt his house to the ground.

But in the life of nations you have no law officer to step in. You cannot arrest a nation, and unfortunately you cannot arrest and hang the rulers and diplomatists of nations. If that could have been done in certain cases—and a ruler who is so by the accident of birth is no more in the sight of God than a common soldier, and there is no more reason why he should not be punished for crime—this war would never have been.

There is no one, in the words of my text, to judge between the nations or to arbitrate between the peoples. Each nation is a law unto itself. It is true that you can have agreements and treaties among nations, and it is also frightfully true that you can disregard such treaties and violate them at your will and when they become inconvenient. You can have an agreement among the surrounding nations to respect and even defend the freedom and integrity and neutrality of little nationalities like Belgium and

Holland. But why should you need an agreement? Surely it is a right of Belgium and Holland to exist, if by their own industry and morality they can. And surely the marching of armed men without their consent through any of their territories, and more still the battering of their choicest buildings and the slaying of their women and children, is a crime of the deepest and blackest character. I suppose if we sifted the matter to the bottom there are not more than fifty people directly responsible for the present war with its appalling devastation and slaughter. But does it not strike you, as you think of the hundreds of thousands of men in the prime of young manhood—on whose education millions of pounds have been spent—smashed and slaughtered, and hundreds of thousands more shattered in nerve or maimed in limb and body, and hundreds of thousands of homes and hearts tortured with anxiety and sorrow and plunged into irreparable loss and grief, that this is the most colossal crime in history, and that no punishment that the mind of man could devise is severe enough for the men who are the prime movers in it? But you cannot lay your hands upon them. There is no law of man that can touch them. So far from being punished, if they can but carry their enterprise through successfully,

they will be lauded and crowned as heroes by unthinking millions.

You are quite aware by now that by a certain set of people in Germany, represented by General von Bernhardt, war has been openly preached as the supreme virtue, and peace has been derided as unworthy of a brave nation and fatal to the development of its highest qualities. You know that it has been further taught that smaller nationalities have no right to an independent existence; that a nation, especially Germany, has a perfect right at a convenient moment to strike a smashing blow at any other nation, and seize its possessions if it can, and to disregard treaties and agreements; that the chief business of a nation is to train and drill—to educate and train and drill its men for warfare, and to create such instruments of destruction that it shall become a terror to all the other nations and be a colossus that bestrides the whole world, and that every power that stands in the way of this ambition for world-wide aggression must be humiliated and overthrown. I do not think I am misrepresenting things—it has been a revelation of the saddest kind to some of us. And in order to further these ends any means may be adopted—the most treacherous and cruel and barbarous. I am not speaking now of the great German

people, but I am speaking of the most powerful cult and influence in the land.

Now what are you to do? I mean at the moment. You have no one, as I said, to judge and arbitrate between the nations. You cannot allow that nation to have its way—to thrust itself upon Belgium in spite of her protest; to crush France and appropriate its wealth; and then to invade your own shores, and humble you to the dust, and rob you of your influence in the earth. There is no power in the world that can persuade me that that would have been a worthy or a Christian attitude on the part of this nation, or that we would thus have fulfilled our duty to our great colonies and dependencies throughout the world, to whom the government and shelter of this nation has been a blessing. On the contrary, I believe we would have been traitors to our trust.

But what are we to do? Is there any other way of defending our own liberties and the liberties of others save by taking the sword and entering with solemn resolve into this dread conflict? Is not this such a time as that of which our Lord had spoken: "Now he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one"? I am profoundly convinced that there is no other way but this awful way which

we are treading just now, and must tread for months to come. It is the path of justice and righteousness.

But here is the question that has been in my mind for a long time past, and I doubt not in yours also: Is there to be no other way? Must things go on for ever like this? At the end of this horrible slaughter, must the nations go on in the old mad way of piling up armaments, withdrawing millions of men from productive occupations that add to the wealth of the world, and setting them upon callings that produce nothing—that simply consume and destroy? I must confess, brethren, that if I felt that I would despair of the world. What I am anxious to know is whether it passes the wit of man to conceive a scheme for the drawing up of an agreement among the nations, the nations of Europe at least—an agreement which should provide for the limitation and diminution of armaments, with some supreme court of arbitration?

I know the reply will be that we have no power to deal with an offending or recalcitrant nation, and we have no guarantee that each nation would respect the agreement; and there would be plotting and scheming on the part of a selfish and offending nation to draw away

some other party to such an agreement. I shall be told with some amount of truth that diplomatists are among the last persons in the world to be trusted. But it still seems to me that we must risk something, and if the end of this war be that we are henceforth to trust no man's word and no nation's good faith, then alas! all the blood and treasure will have been spent in vain, and these precious lives have been laid down for naught.

I must confess that my hopes are otherwise—that the nations will be so sick at heart with this awful slaughter that they will say, "Never again. We must find some less terrible way." Some way of bringing pressure to bear upon an offending and menacing nation, moral pressure—pressure of united refusal to trade with it in any way whatsoever.

My great hope and prayer is, not that the German nation may be shattered by this war, but that its ideals cherished during the last twenty-five years may be shattered beyond hope of recovery, and that its present rulers will never rule again.

Finally I go back to the point from which I started, namely, that the present awful conflict is wrong, terribly wrong—by which I mean that we ought never to have been forced into it.

And we never would have been if the first part of my text had been a reality. Be sure, after all, that the fault is there. God—the God who has come to us in Christ Jesus our Lord—has not been allowed to arbitrate and judge among the nations. The teachings of Christ have not been followed. We who profess His name in all the nations of Europe have not followed His way. I know there has been a great deal of profession of piety. No one has been more prominent in that matter than the Kaiser himself. The professors and pastors of Berlin, some time ago, in the manifesto which they published,—which was the blindest document I ever saw,—declared that this was a war for Protestantism. Considering that Germany's ally in this war was Austria-Hungary, the most bigoted Roman Catholic country in Europe, that was as amazing as the other statements in a document which was peculiarly blind to facts.

What one is constrained to say is this, that if Protestantism requires such methods for its maintenance and progress, it had better fail, and that the cruellest blow has been struck against Protestantism in Belgium and in the world by this war that could have been dealt to it.

No, it is no more Protestantism than it is

Christianity. It is because men have departed from the pure teaching of Christ that such an ideal has been cherished and that we are at war this day. And the thing is still to preach Christ—to lift Him up whom the nations have forgotten and whose teachings they have forsaken; to proclaim Him still as the true King of nations and the Prince of peace; to declare that the government must be upon His shoulder, and that He must be allowed to shape and mould the policy of the nations. And the effective way to that is this: He must be allowed to rule in our own hearts. There is no way to make Christ King of the nations save by making Him King of the individual heart and life. We can never bring in His Kingdom by Acts of Parliament: the utmost they can do is to prepare His way. But we can make Him the Judge and Arbitrator in our own lives. We can submit the programme of our whole life and the programme of every day to Him. We can let His will decide in every doubtful and perplexing situation. For be sure that everyone who does that is adding something to the increase of Christ's Kingdom, and nobody will add anything to it by any outside means or efforts until this be done. So I have to make Him Lord in my own life. I have to turn my

own sword into a ploughshare. I have to cease being quarrelsome and bitter and grasping and jealous and envious and self-assertive, and I have to pray that the strength that has flowed in that channel may now flow into another and purer, and that I may labour to bless and help. And that when I must fight it may be with a pure desire that peace, an abiding peace, may come—that is, that I may fight for the Kingdom of Christ and for the getting of His will done in my own life and in the world.

□ We thank Thee, Heavenly Father, for the great prophecies and dreams of the inspired men of Holy Scripture, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. May we believe in their visions as in Thine own decrees, and labour with all diligence to bring their realisation nearer. Increase our faith, we beseech Thee, and take out of our hearts all malice and revenge, that we may believe in and work for the coming of the reign of the Prince of Peace. *Amen.*

V

A GREAT PROMISE

“ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.”—EZEK. xxxvi. 25-28.

THIS is a great promise in a great chapter, a stupendous and almost incredible promise made to people who had passed through distressful and convulsive experiences—robbed of their land, as the Belgian people have been, by a great military conqueror, and driven out of it into exile ; their land devastated and impoverished, their holy city a heap of ruins and a desolation, as Belgian cities are to-day ; a people dejected and sorrowful, robbed and spoiled and scattered. And the significant

feature of this chapter is that God sets Himself and His divine power over against all the devastation and ruin, and the sad-heartedness of these people. It is not that this shall be done and that shall come to pass, but "*I*" will bring it to pass, "*I*" will do it. The first personal pronoun, as it refers to the Almighty, occurs no fewer than thirteen times in the verses I have read. It indicates that through all the convulsions that have swept over the nations, changing the map of the Eastern world, there is one thing that remains unchanged, that is the power of God, which is as fresh and unexhausted as at the Creation. And there is this significant note running all through the great chapter: God can make again what men have marred; He can restore what has been destroyed, make clean what men have defiled, and bring back what seems to have vanished for ever. And it is in God that our hope must be now.

Further, you will see that my text has to do with the people, and not merely with their circumstances. You may say with perfect truth that it was their circumstances that had distressed them, and not their condition—which is true of most of us to-day. It is the trying and dark circumstances that distress us—the disturbance in the labour world; the changes in

Government; the attacks and counter-attacks going on in our newspapers, which are often infinitely mischievous; the lack of decisive victory to our arms; the large number of killed and wounded in the casualty lists. It is *new circumstances* that we want and cry out for.

We do not always see that it is *conditions* that produce circumstances—conditions of mind and heart; restless ambitions; distrustful, jealous, feverish, and angry conditions that produce disastrous circumstances. It is condition of mind and heart that has produced the unparalleled situation in which the world finds itself to-day. And mark you, in their turn, circumstances may help to create conditions. Through circumstances God may work a humbling of pride, a toning down of rank greed, a chastening of ambition, a cleansing and purging. Or, at any rate, circumstances may help to a very large extent to make the condition in which God's Spirit can more freely work; and it is only through circumstances of trial and suffering that some people can be led to see their folly and their sin.

Here we have the great promise: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit." That is what God is going to do for a nation. Do you not think the nations need it to-day as much

as Israel needed it? You will all agree that Germany needs it. It needs no persuasion to convince the British nation, nor indeed to convince three-fourths of the world of that fact. The appalling atrocities proved beyond question by Lord Bryce's Commission,—unmatched in all the annals of savage warfare,—the murder of women and children and unarmed men by land and by sea, all demonstrate that. And I am bound to believe that God can give a new spirit to Germany, through the war, for which she, more than any other nation, is responsible.

But did not Great Britain—and does she not—need a new heart and a new spirit? Do you not think that we were, before this black cloud of circumstance settled upon us, a nation largely forgetting God, growing materialistic, mad for gain and pleasure, self-indulgent and luxurious, restless and lawless?

Therefore from the nation we must come to ourselves. At the present moment we cannot change our circumstances. Here they are—whatever has brought them about; but we *can* examine our spirits and search our hearts, for it often happens that a new spirit will create new circumstances. It has often been done. A new spirit in the old home or office or school or church may make new circumstances for

yourself and others. These people were going back to the old surroundings, but they were going back in a new spirit, and they were going to make a new land—to rebuild the old waste places, to till their desolate and barren fields, and God was going to help them. They were going to begin life again on the old spot—a new people to create a new world.

Now I wonder if I might venture with all humility to point out certain directions in which a new spirit is required and may be given—to us and to our fellow-men and to the world !

Well, I turn first of all, as a preacher always should, to my text, and see two things which God distinctly promises to these people, and they are very wonderful, and vitally important.

(1) The first is *purity*. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean.” It is a big thing, and not to be confined to one section of thought and conduct and relationship, as we sometimes confine it. Every section of life is included: “From *all* your filthiness and all your idols will I cleanse you.” It means personal and social purity, of course. A people clean in imagination and speech, in thought and conduct; but also clean in literature, clean in its dealings, making clean money, fighting with clean weapons; a clean public life, pure politics,

clean administration; honest commerce, an absence of foul play in all competitions. It means being honourable, untainted in motive, unselfish, without beastliness or trickery or pretence or hypocrisy.

All that is possible for a nation. It is the work and the gift of God. And it must begin with the individual. Let a man offer for all the purposes and relationships of life—even a man deeply conscious of taint—the great prayer, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,” and he may receive the same answer as of old: “I will, *be thou clean.*”

There is nothing more wonderful than the cleansing and purifying power of God. Even in the Old Testament it was firmly and profoundly believed in. Take two pictures. Think of the young prophet that is to be, when the vision of God came to him, crying, “Woe is me—for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips.” And no sooner is that confession uttered than the lips are cleansed by the fire from God’s altar.

Then think of Joshua, the representative of the people, the high priest, clothed in filthy garments and standing before the Angel of the Lord. And the Lord said to them that stood by, “Take away the filthy garments from him,” and to him He said, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to

pass away from thee," etc. It all means that the heart of humanity can be cleansed. It may be by fire, but it can be cleansed. This also cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts.

(2) The next thing promised in this passage is the *tender heart*, which in Hebrew idiom means also the tender conscience.

We have of late years rather repudiated the ideas that our fathers cherished about the natural hardness and depravity of the heart of man and its need of renewal by Divine grace. We have prided ourselves on our advancement and our superior enlightenment. We have talked a great deal about the divinity in man, and even of the divinity of man, and the evolution of the race, and we have boasted of our civilisation and the kind of man it could produce. We thought we were growing more humane and sensitive to the infliction of suffering, and growing farther and farther away from the brute and the savage, and we know now that the ape and the tiger, ay and the demon, slumber beneath the skin of the most enlightened and intellectual persons—that ambition and greed of power and jealousy can blind men to all considerations of justice and humanity and the rights of others, and can make them absolutely unscrupulous and ferocious in the pursuance of their schemes.

Robert Burns says of one form of self-gratification,

“ But O it hardens a’ within,
And petrifies the feelin’,”

and you may say that of ambition of pride of place and power—of *love of money*, of *love of pleasure*. Let either of these master men and they will grow utterly callous as to the price to others at which their desire is satisfied. And what matters is that which happens in the individual soul: the hardening process may have been going on with some of us. And there is nothing more sure than this, that *the heart of man can be changed*. “A new heart will I give you, . . . and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh,”—a heart that feels, that sympathises, that cares and loves. “Be ye tender-hearted,” says St. Paul. Have a sensitive soul towards need and suffering—a sensitive conscience towards duty and the claims of others. This also is the gift of God.

(3) If I were to go away from my text, I should suggest that the great need of the hour is *an earnest and serious spirit*. If people are not sobered and won from levity by the seriousness of the situation through which we are passing, there is nothing that will awaken them.

I suppose there are some whose levity is incurable. If London were set on fire they would have their amusements unless their own house caught the flame. As a matter of fact, life is always a serious business, but it has never been so serious as it is for us at this hour, with peril and death all about us ; and no one can foresee the ultimate issue. It is not panic nor gloom but deep seriousness that the hour demands—serious and earnest thought.

(4) I would urge further that the direction in which we need a new spirit is in *simplicity of living*. Before this war broke out we had gone very far from the simplicity of our fathers, and we of the comfortable middle classes were going far towards luxury and display, and what even professedly Christian people spent on the cause of Christ was the merest fraction compared with what they spent on dress and on pleasures. We may well pray God to deliver us from the spirit of social pride, from love of display, and to beget within us a simpler and a more modest spirit—a spirit which is content to practise self-denial, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

(5) I come, however, to the greatest thing, which includes and sums up all others in itself, when I say that what is needed is the heart of *love*

to Christ and the spirit of obedience and devotion to Him.

The great promise of this passage is, "I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes." And the spirit of God—whatever else be the mystery about it (and wherever God is there is mystery)—is the spirit which was manifest in Jesus Christ our Lord. Perhaps there was a day when we had that spirit and were governed by it—we went out into the world, it may be, with noble ambitions; lofty ideals possessed us, to live pure, speak true, follow the Christ, to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to live the life of prayer. But as the hoarfrost vanishes and departs with the growing day, so our pure white purposes and ideals melted, and they are no longer with us. Is it not true, if we search our hearts, that some precious things are no longer there? The blossoms of promise have turned to dust. The fervours, the high enthusiasms, the purpose to be valiant and earnest soldiers of Christ, have died down.

Well, there is nothing more certain than that they can be renewed. My text is the message of God printed on almost every page of the Bible. It is really the call of Christ—a cry that has in it an almost agony of entreaty. A cry that rings through the whole of this prophecy and

through other prophets is the cry of the Godhead to man: "Turn ye, turn unto Me," or "*Return*, and I will put My Spirit within you." It is the cry of God longing to bestow His highest and greatest gift on man, and the astonishing figure you get often is that of man reluctant and unwilling. And until man is willing it cannot be done. The new heart and the right spirit can only come as man is willing to co-operate with God. The 37th verse expresses a great truth: "For all this I will be inquired of to do it." It means the absolute necessity of willingness and desire on man's part to receive God's greatest gifts. It means prayer that opens the heart to the softening and renewing influences of the Holy Spirit. It means that a man can be born anew. It means that he can rise on some stepping-stone of his dead self to higher things. It means that he can give himself to Christ. And, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold, they are all become new."

For the clean heart and the true heart and the tender heart, O Lord, we pray. Divine Renewer, renew and cleanse, restore and make right our hearts within us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

VI

THE WAR AND DRINK

“Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts: but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands.”—ISA. v. 11-12.

IT is an extremely sad picture which Isaiah draws in these two and the following verses. I suppose it was a true picture of a certain section of society as he knew it in what we have come to call the Holy Land. Otherwise it is difficult to see why he should have drawn the picture or pronounced his woe. It is well to remember that the picture is drawn while the tragic shadow of war lies over the land, war and defeat. And it is probable that both war and defeat are in some measure to be traced to the fact of social life set before us here. Indeed, it would be worth while to call your attention to the fact that my text is the second of two

companion pictures, to both of which the downfall of Judah may be partly traced. The first is a picture of greed for land which had developed, perhaps in the military country of Assyria, as a national policy, and perhaps in the social life of Judah and Jerusalem. The land question and the drink question, as Dr. G. A. Smith says in his incomparable book on Isaiah, are not modern but very ancient questions. And it is the drink question with which I have to deal now—not merely as Isaiah saw it, but as we see it. It was the menace of his times, and it is the grave menace of our own. It was under the shadow of invasion and war that people were carousing after this fashion, and the dire consequences of which he depicts in the lurid words and phrases which occur after my text.

The prophet's contention appears to be that there is an operation and a voice of God in the great happenings that are befalling Judah and Jerusalem, and these people are blind and deaf to the work and the warning of God—perhaps rendered blind and deaf by drink, or drowning the voice of God by the sound of their harp and viol and tabret and pipe, and stupefying their own sensibility with strong drink. Alas for us! the same thing is going on to-day in this our own dear land. With the most solemn national

crisis that has been upon England for centuries, a crisis which by its very seriousness should have sobered the whole nation, with the angel of Death beating his wings on the great battlefield over our brave sons, our land threatened and our liberties jeopardised, you have people who are giving themselves up to drinking. On the best authority we have it, that in this very time, in certain quarters, there has been an immense increase of drinking and the drink trade has enormously enriched itself already by the disaster of the War—fattening, as it always has done, on the calamities of men.

One of the most disquieting and humiliating things that one has heard in these times is that while our brave fellows have been adventuring their lives on the battlefield and beating back the foe there, great numbers of their womenfolk have allowed themselves to be morally defeated at home by the subtle and degrading vice of drinking. And I say without hesitation it is worse—this kind of defeat—than the defeat of our soldiers by Germans or Turks. For the one defeat might be honourable, but the other can never be anything but a disgrace and a shame. There is no hope for a nation, there is nothing before it but certain destruction, whose womanhood is demoralised by drunkenness. They are

worse enemies to their nation than German spies, for they are poisoning the very springs of the nation's life and injecting the poison into the blood of the future race. There should be an army order forbidding every wife of a soldier, under penalty of losing her allowance, to enter a public-house, and punishing heavily every publican who knowingly serves her with drink. They are both the enemies of this nation in one of the greatest crises of its history, and are working together for its downfall. I venture to say again that the most violent and dangerous alien in our midst is not nearly so great a foe to us as intoxicating drink is, and if you could get up a press campaign to hound it out of the community, you would be doing the most patriotic thing possible.

The other form in which this evil has been manifesting itself is the foolish practice of some people, well-meaning enough, as foolish people often are, of *treating* our men who are on the verge of leaving home for the solemn work of confronting the foe on the field of battle. It is not using too strong language to say that it would be difficult to do our soldiers, or through them our country, a greater injury; and this the Government has now fully realised, as appears from its recent restrictive orders prohibiting *treating* in certain districts.

There are many things, however, to be thankful for. One is that the most enlightened medical opinion of our day is entirely against the use of alcohol. It is never anything but a mischief in the healthy body of a man.

The other thing is that the highest military authorities have pronounced strongly against it. Lord Kitchener has performed many great services for our soldiers and our nation. He has scarcely ever performed a greater than he has done in his messages to our soldiers on the subject of intoxicants, deprecating their use altogether and urging people not to treat our lads with them, and declaring that a soldier can never be fit for his duty who indulges in them at all. After that statement no lad who has joined the colours need deem it a sign of weakness to say "I am an abstainer," for he can shelter himself behind the word and the example of the strongest and greatest soldier in England or perhaps in the world.

It seems to some of us that Lord Kitchener would perform a greater service to the country still if he would issue an order forbidding all drinking of intoxicants while on active service and making it a punishable offence to tempt or to treat soldiers to strong drink.

For after all that has been said by our highest

medical and military authorities, let us be under no delusion such as that under which men laboured in past days, namely, that alcohol does men good. Let it be distinctly understood that it is a poison, that its presence in the body is entirely mischievous, and to injure men who are going to stand in the critical and solemn place between this land and the destruction of its liberties should be a misdemeanour and crime of the highest order.

But how the delusion persists, carefully nurtured and fostered by people—and, alas! they are a mighty host—first of all those who have vested interests in the liquor traffic, reaping their dividends from it each year, and the others who habitually indulge in it. You no sooner make an effort to restrict the mischief than a cry is raised about robbing the poor man of his drink and depriving him of a source of pleasure! You might just as well talk of robbing people of a pestilence that stalks through the land, or of depriving the poor innocent fly of the spider's web, or robbing the sheep of a wolf that is always prowling round the fold and snatching away the weaker and more foolish members of the flock. What one is constrained to ask is, whether in the interests of national health and morality the Legislature should not step in with further re-

strictions, or whether this Trade should be allowed still to continue to dominate our national life.

There has been a great rounding up of alien enemies within our borders recently, and you can never carry through a great movement like that without suffering being imposed on some innocent people at least; and you cannot restrict or suppress a great traffic like that of strong drink without somebody being made to suffer. My point is, that we have no greater enemy to the physique or the morality of our nation than this enemy of strong drink. And it is far better that an industry should suffer and be ruined than that that industry—which by the way has enriched those who own it more than any other industry among us—should be allowed to run its devastating career to the ruin of the nation.

It is an enormous gain, for which we may well thank God, to have won over the highest medical science and the greatest military authorities, neither of whom can be called fanatics, to the side of total abstinence—to have had the great fraud of alcoholism, which posed so long as a benefactor to the people, exposed. But there is a great deal more to be done. The conscience of the nation has yet to be aroused to see the foul and shameful blot on its life caused by the

drink traffic, and I venture to suggest certain things that should be done.

First, *there is legislation*. It should be the business of Parliament to make it as easy as possible for people to do right, and as hard as possible for them to do wrong. It should be the business of legislation to step in to protect the weak even against themselves. Legislation is concerned with the physique and the morality of our citizens, and we are adopting all manner of measures now for the protection of the health and morality of children, in the interests of the future well-being of the State. When our coasts are in danger of invasion we take such drastic measures as the closing of the North Sea. At the rumour of an air raid we submit to the darkening of the streets of London, and go about at night in the gloom that lay over the city of London before electricity had been discovered or gas invented.

So in the presence of a greater peril than all, we have a right to demand legislation for the protection of our people from an evil which is far more certain and far more deadly than any Zeppelin raid can ever be, and far, far more certain than the invasion of our shores. The evil is pressing upon us sorely now. It will be far more pressing if and when God should

grant victory to our arms. The day of victory and of peace, when the long and awful strain is over, which may God hasten, will be for us a day of humiliation and shame if our brave lads and the people who are often their evil geniuses are to troop into our public-houses and celebrate the goodness of Almighty God by a degradation of their manhood in a drunken debauch. And we have a right to look to our Government to take steps to prevent this by some wise and strong restriction of the hours and the facilities for drinking. When China leads the way with regard to its opium, and Russia forgoes 90 millions of revenue by prohibiting the sale of vodka, surely Great Britain must not lag behind and refuse to part with its idols, which make for its undoing.

Of course a great deal more than prohibition is called for, and if the Legislature is ever to do its work there must be behind it *a strong and wholesome compelling power of public opinion*. And here comes in the work of the social reformer. In some part at least drinking and drunkenness is an effect, not a cause; and the cause is the almost intolerable conditions under which many of our people are compelled to live. The drinking of soldiers' wives—as well as of many other people—is partly due to the fact

that there is no common meeting-place save the public-house. In many a village it is indeed the only house for the public, and in many a slum it is the only spot of brightness. In your great city centres commerce has provided—and has proved it to be profitable—a place where men and women may eat and drink without intoxicants; but in rural districts and in working-class quarters our genius has not yet invented a substitute for the public-house and a counter-attraction to its allurements. And while it is up to our legislators and one of the crying needs of the hour to provide better housing conditions and more decent dwellings for our working people, in the interests of national health and morality, it is the bounden duty of philanthropists and the social reformer not merely to denounce what exists but to provide some antidote.

But there is still something left. *More important than the politician or the social reformer is the Christian.* What is to be his attitude? He is often, thank God, both politician and social reformer, but he is more. He has something which the mere politician and social reformer lack. He sees that all men belong by right to God in body and soul and spirit; that to deliver them from evil Christ died; that the bodies of

men and women may be and should be the temples of the Holy Ghost. He sees, or he ought to see and not to blind himself to it, that thousands of people are ruined and slain in body and in soul every year by this evil. You can scarcely find stronger language than that of verse 14 respecting strong drink. It means this, and it is true, you need an enlarged hell to accommodate all the victims who are slain annually both physically and morally by strong drink. That is not the language of a teetotal fanatic but of an inspired prophet of the Lord. It would be difficult to imagine a meaner death than the death of the victim of alcohol. The soldier dies fighting for his country and for freedom. The victim of strong drink dies of self-indulgence—a miserable victim of a craving which at first he would not and afterwards could not refuse, which had shorn his life of all its best and noblest elements, and rendered him incapable of any high or worthy character or service. What then is the Christian's proper attitude? Suppose I know that drunkenness arises out of the drink traffic—that where that traffic is prohibited, as in the "dry" States in America, drunkenness is unknown and there is an immense diminution in almost every other kind of vice; and suppose I know that this traffic is not only slaying its tens

of thousands every year but is the fruitful parent of many other vices and the gravest hindrance to the progress of Christ's Kingdom, which it is, shall I say, It is no concern of mine? Shall I not say, It is a foe that must be grappled with, a hindrance which must be lessened even if it be not altogether removed from the path?

Shall I not say, At least I will have clean hands in the matter? I will have no dividends from this demoralising traffic, and it shall have no support from me. As it is the foe of goodness, I will be its uncompromising foe. I will not only help its victims to get free, but I will do my utmost to destroy its power to make victims. I will not merely play the Good Samaritan to the wounded and robbed man by the wayside, I will clear out the gang of thieves who infest the road, that it may be made safe for travellers.

One cannot help feeling that if only the Church of Christ realised that the drink traffic is the greatest obstacle to the moral and spiritual progress of this nation it would say, to the last man and woman, We will forswear it for ever, and our hands and lips shall not be stained by complicity in its destructive work. It is a case at least for self-denial, and at most for strong resistance.

But we must go farther than that. We must point out to men who are seeking false comfort

where the source of true comfort is. The complete antidote to strong drink is not to be found in social reform, nor even in total abstinence. The enlargement of life which many seek to find in it, the oblivion to trouble, the comfort, the stimulus to endurance, let us not hesitate to believe and to affirm are to be found, not here, but in Jesus Christ.

What is more, the strength to master the craving and the appetite resident in the blood of some men is to be found in Him. I am not speaking without my book. I come of a race described by the prophet in verse 22, a race of mighty drinkers—some of my relatives in childhood were in the business. One of the shadowy memories of my childhood is that of a relative who ruined his business and himself with strong drink, and one is that of a strong man converted by the grace of God in middle life, and by that same grace turning away from it and for the later years of his life abstaining from it, and never allowing it to cross his threshold, and never needing it because he found in Christ all he needed.

So I would proclaim with the keenest evangelist to-day the sufficiency of Christ to save men from this as from every other snare, and then I would plead with my brethren to make it easier

for men to follow Him, to believe that He is the enemy of all that opposes His Kingdom, and to practise self-denial in order that others may be delivered and helped, and that His Kingdom may be brought in.

Our Father, we pray for a sober Britain. With shame and sorrow we think of the degradation and misery caused by strong drink. With sad pity we think of its many victims. Break its power, we earnestly pray. Strengthen the hands of all those who are fighting it. May we be among the number. Arouse Thy Church to see this great curse, and free her from all complicity with it. Give strength to all who are struggling to be free from its dominion, and grant liberty to the captive. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

VII

WORSHIPPING THE DEVIL

“ Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”—MATT. iv. 8-10.

THIS is a part of the great spiritual crisis which we call the Temptation of Christ. It is an experience which stands at the very outset of His public ministry. You may be sure that it was not His first acquaintance with temptation. He was tempted in all points like as we are, and that means that His temptation must have begun with the dawning of His moral sense. These temptations of exceptional fierceness assailed Him on the threshold of the great work which He came to do for us. They were a desperate attempt on the part of a very real tempter to break His purpose or to

vitiate it. The first to use His superior powers for His own advantage, to make the material triumph over the spiritual, in putting bread before the will of God. The second was a temptation to presume upon the care and goodness and promise of God—to do something as useless and foolhardy as if one should fling himself down from the roof of the Temple and trust to God to keep him from breaking any bones, and so to create a profound sensation.

The third temptation is here. There is granted to the Saviour a dazzling vision of world power, the nations bowing to His sceptre, and the way to it is that of some concession and some homage to the power of evil. "Fall down and worship me."

I propose that we should reverently try to think ourselves into the situation here, to conceive of our Lord as having been baptized, and so publicly consecrated to His Divine mission—a world mission, really to win the world. Into the wilderness He has gone after His baptism to brood over it and over the means of accomplishing it. And here is a part of the intense spiritual conflict into which He was flung and which He had to fight out in solitude in His own soul. Here was what was made to appear to Him—as to its truth or falsehood I express no opinion for the moment.

There were the kingdoms of the world with all their glory, their wealth and military power, their pomp and splendour. There was one who claimed that he held them, so to speak, in the hollow of his hand. They could be secured. Our Lord had the way—namely, the way of service and suffering and sacrifice—before His mind. But now this other way is flashed upon Him—the short cut; the acknowledgment of the power that professed to hold them; the acceptance of, the bowing down to, the false and evil principles that governed the world at that time; the doing homage to the devil. That is the way the Kingdom is to be won.

Now, my brethren, I venture to say that to every mind which nurses great thoughts, and revolves them, concerning its destiny, that finds great ambitions and resolves stirring within it, some such temptation presents itself.

Do you want an illustration? It is before you. I grant its imperfection, but I cannot help feeling its pertinency. The most prominent person in the eyes of the world to-day is the German Emperor. To him and to his entourage, his satellites, or prompters, or masters, call them what you will, there has come a vision of all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and a vision of world power for their nation. And it may very well be questioned whether these people against

whom we are fighting, and are compelled righteously to fight, and who are maintaining two immense battle lines, it may be questioned, with their frugality and industry and their technical knowledge and skill, if they had gone the right way to work, whether they had not in them the power to attain to pre-eminence and predominance over a great part of the kingdoms of the world—whether they would not, if modesty and a high moral purpose had governed them, have become kings in the realm of commerce and philosophy and education.

Personally, I am not at all sure that if the German ideal had been that of service to the world, and she had steadfastly pursued that path, she would not have been in time the chief commercial power and the chief centre of learning in the modern world, her enterprising people penetrating to every land and getting a leading place in the labour market and in the schools. And my own profound conviction is that the rulers of Germany, in whose hand the people seem to be, have been tempted of the devil and have listened to the temptation. They have come to believe that they are destined to be the masters of the world; that there is no supremacy for them apart from *political supremacy*—that apart from that, indeed, they cannot live; that their only

path to power lies through conquest—they must subdue their neighbours by force; that you have a perfect right to invade your neighbour's territory if only you have military force sufficient to do it; that his only right to exist as a free and independent State is that he has material force enough to defend himself against your attack; that the greatest and most cruel wrong is justified by "military necessity," military necessity being the political supremacy of Germany; that the kingdoms of this world and their glory may belong to her—and that to this end she has been perfecting her terrific military machine for the last generation stands a confessed fact in her own writings. She has surely been tempted of the devil to believe that any means, even the most unscrupulous and diabolical, may be used to this end. She has yet to learn that the world will not be conquered and possessed in that way; that first of all the most pacifically inclined nation will fight not only with arms but with its soul for freedom, and that even if you should conquer it by force you do not possess it. You may wring tribute from it, but you never possess it unless you possess its heart—which is its respect and goodwill and loyal trust. Apart from these things it will be a source of weakness rather than of strength.

But does not the same temptation meet any man in whose breast some great ambition stirs to be and do something in this mighty world? And who would be without ambition or have men to be without it?

Is it not a miserable thing for a man with a soul in him to be content just to drag or linger through an existence, to live on other people's achievements, to eat and drink and wear and spend and live his little life, and pass into the silence, leaving nothing to show that he has ever lived? At any rate, one would stir young men up to something worthier than that. Where is the use of living if nothing be achieved? Is not the passion for achievement—to make some difference to the world—a heaven-born passion after all?

Very well, then. I venture to assert that whoever has it will be met with this temptation. If you are going to succeed, to get advancement, promotion, prosperity—nay, even if you are going to get joy—you must worship the devil. You are not going to do it by straightforwardness and industry and candour and right dealing. You must—or at any rate you may—trick and lie and pretend and defraud and use all manner of back-stairs influences. You may be unjust to people, you may use them for your own purposes

in pure selfishness, you may fawn and flatter and play the hypocrite—or you may fleece and sweat people and play the tyrant, and break the law of Christ every time. You know as well as I do the theory that is abroad that you cannot succeed in business by honesty and industry and justice and straightforwardness. That is the devil standing by the pathway of commerce and saying, Unless you worship me, you shall not prosper.

But it is not only in business that these temptations reach men and women. They come to men in the advocacy of great causes, and they have been too often yielded to. Take the great Oxford movement in the Church of England, whose "Secret History" was written some years ago now. It was revealed in that book by letters and other documents that the founders of that great movement acted on the principle that the end justified the means, or, in other words, that you might do evil in order that good might come. "Only be sure that the end is right," wrote Ward, "and you may cheat and lie like a trooper."

I suppose that was the Jesuitical doctrine or theory also—that the scheming and rusing and lying which you allow to be fair in war are quite justifiable in the holy cause of religion. I suppose the same theory was held by the leaders in the

militant movement among women. The force of the temptation is just here—"Why take the slow and doubtful way of patient waiting and toiling and advocating and transparent dealing? You are up against a stone wall of prejudice and indifference and bigotry, or you are confronted with a most strong and determined foe. You may die before you can accomplish anything. Well, then, fall back upon craft and guile and stratagem and violence. Take any means so that you make an impression and so that you score a point. Let conscience and morality go. Be governed by policy and expediency and what is euphoniously called the necessities of the situation."

I wonder who has not felt the temptation, as Shakespeare puts it, to do a little wrong in order to secure a *great right* or a great advantage; in Christian work, to adopt unworthy and doubtful methods for securing funds, to act unworthily, to misrepresent things a little, to tell half the truth, to pander to low tastes, to feign and dissemble?

Do you not think that was in part the temptation of our Lord? To pretend to go with the people in their political ambitions, to yield a little to their wishes in order to capture them and to sacrifice principle in order to keep them,

to concede to their prejudices and throw dust in their eyes a little, to get them to die for you, which is much more clever than to die for them or to provoke their prejudices until they kill you.

Of course, to the devil and all who represent his doctrine there is nothing so absurd as to allow yourself to suffer and to be defeated by your enemies, as our Lord apparently did. You remember that Simon Peter protested against that, and you also remember our Lord's significant word to him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

After all, the tempter is a blind bungler to approach the pure soul of Christ with such a temptation as this, for of course the temptation is to save *Himself* the long strain of service and sacrifice, to take a short and easy cut. He did not realise that the Son of Man had not come to get but to give. The deep passion of Divine Love that longed to save by sacrifice was incomprehensible to the tempter. The dupes of the devil who surrounded the cross of Calvary, crying to Him who hung thereon, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," were not aware that they were offering the greatest tribute that could ever be offered to the Son of God, and not an insult.

But, my friends, that is too much the spirit of the world, and one of the proofs, if you want it,

that the world lieth in the wicked one, as St. John says. You must save yourself—you are here for that purpose; you must never allow yourself to be defeated; you must strive for yourself, and protect yourself, and look out for yourself, and make every situation yield something to yourself; always stand to make for yourself; never mind others—save your own skin. And be sure, dear friends, wherever that spirit appears it is of the devil, and to yield to it is to worship the devil. Not Christ, but anti-Christ.

You will observe that our Lord orders it *off the ground*—as you may do in His name. The tempter was, as Milton says, “foiled in all his wiles, defeated and repulsed, and Eden raised in the vast wilderness,” and that Eden of victory is for you and me.

You will observe also the principle that Christ set up in opposition to the tempter’s suggestion, a principle which is enshrined in the words of Holy Scripture, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

Dr. Campbell Morgan points out in his book with the awkward title *The Crises of the Christ*, the intimate connection between worship and service, and affirms that we invariably *serve* that which we worship. I suppose St. Paul means

something of the kind when he says, "Know ye not to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey; his servants or slaves you are whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." You will remember also our Lord's words, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." To have worshipped Satan would have meant obligation to him, the acknowledgment of the principle of evil as though it had a right to rule; and it would have vitiated the worship and obedience to God which was the very breath of the life of Christ our Lord.

I want you to see, my friends, the full significance of these words. They mean that any compromise with the spirit of the world, any admittance into our hearts of the principle of evil as a ruling principle, simply ruins us for the service of God. I mean that the cherishing in our hearts of any principle contrary to the teaching of Christ, any unlawful desire or purpose or wish, will simply ruin our effectiveness as servants of Christ and our spiritual influence.

Here undoubtedly is our guiding principle, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God," and to worship Him is to do homage always and everywhere to the principle of righteousness and justice, of truth and love and sacrifice, and never to deflect by a hairbreadth from absolute

obedience to those eternal principles. And that is to be heart-whole in the service of God. "*Him only*" is the very early word of the Scriptures. "No other gods beside Me"—no other object of adoration and worship. There, my brethren, is where we have failed. We have tried to do impossible things—to have a divided monarchy in our lives, to serve God and Mammon.

Every such attempt is bound to end in failure. We may have religion in such a case, in some measure, but it will be an external thing, a part of the policy of life, devoid of power and effectiveness and of joy and all real worth. There can only be one real master of life, and if Jesus Christ is to be anything at all He must be that—our Master and our Lord—our *Saviour and our King*.

Most holy and merciful Saviour, defend me in every hour of subtle temptation. Help me to see through all the disguises in which evil clothes itself. Save me from sacrificing any inward good for outward gain or pleasure, and from doing evil that good may come. For Thy Great Name's sake. *Amen*.

VIII

THE BITTER LAMENT OF CHRIST

“ And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.”—LUKE xix. 41-44.

THE attention of men has always been arrested and held by this great picture—the picture of the strong Son of God riding towards Jerusalem in outward triumph and honour, His path strewn with palm leaves and branches and even with the garments of an obeisance-making crowd, whose exclamations and shouts of homage rent the air; then, as the fair city came in sight, one of the fairest even now from Mount Olivet, moved to the very centre of His soul, not by the homage of the

crowd—He has almost forgotten them for the moment—but by the desolating vision which swept over Him of the coming doom and destruction of the city: all the horrors of its siege, its fair buildings, its sacred Temple demolished, its children dashed to the ground, their blood besprinkling the stones of the street. Over that and the cause of it all, the blindness and bigotry and crass stupidity that led to it, Jesus wept—not shedding silent tears as by the grave of Lazarus, but breaking down under strong emotion, and breaking out into sobs and lamentation and crying, “O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to peace!” In all probability the crowd would be greatly amazed and taken aback with this outburst of emotion. The world never likes a weeping prophet, and there seemed to the outward eye just then so little to weep about. It is quite likely that no one—not even the Apostles—believed then in the gloomy and dismal prophecy. It was surely the day for rejoicing and gladness, for songs rather than for tears.

What will probably occur to most of us in a moment would be this: If He wept then over that little city, the circuit of which could be made, as I have personally demonstrated, on a spring afternoon, how much more would He

weep now? For though the city may deserve to perish, though it have brought its destruction upon itself by its folly and blindness, you may be sure our Lord can never contemplate its tragic downfall without deep emotion. Do you not think His heart is stirred to pity even to-day at the ruined cities and the exiled people of Belgium—at the devastation of the fair land of Northern France, and the battered bodies of hundreds of thousands of men—at the broken-hearted wives and mothers and lovers in all nations, and over the shames of some of our military camps, where men have soiled their souls? Do you not think He would weep most of all over the people who can view all this without emotion, who are so cursed with levity that they will have their dancing and dressing and merry-making as though nothing were on, and as though the nations were not being sifted in the furnace of trial? Do you not think He would weep over these as over people for whom there was no hope, and whom nothing on earth can move out of their selfish indulgence?—and over the fatuity of people who have lived for this orgy of destruction, and have extolled and glorified the war spirit as the supreme virtue of the race?

Let us ask why our Lord wept that day when

others were rejoicing? And the first answer to that question is: It was because *Jerusalem had refused Him and all His appeals*. Because He could not save Jerusalem—He could only weep over it. It is an awful, a truly terrible and tragic thing when the only thing the Lord Christ can do for a nation or a person is to weep over its fate. And that may be true—let us face the fact: you can make it impossible for Christ to do anything more. Jerusalem had made the fatal decision to reject Christ, and in choosing that path she had chosen the way of death.

It may be instructively pointed out here that *our Lord had failed with Jerusalem*. He had no influence with Jerusalem. The city was moved that day, it is true, but only to curiosity. We are told by people who regard the awful spectacle to-day of war between so-called Christian nations that *the Church has failed*. Pamphlet after pamphlet that I have read has that for its burden. And the Church is blamed because it has no influence on the nations. Do not misunderstand me. I would not suggest for a moment that the Church is not to blame. The Church, which is the body of Christ, has not adequately represented Him. It is quite likely that the Church in Germany and in England needs the message which came of old to the

Church in Ephesus and Sardis and other cities in Asia Minor, namely, the call to repent. Only let us be careful and not too hasty. It is at least possible that some of the blame for the failure may rest upon the nations, and not on the Churches. Because Isaiah failed to move Jerusalem to repentance and to save her from ruin and defeat and exile, you must not blame Isaiah, you must blame Jerusalem. It may be that Germany and France and England would have *refused a distinctively Christian and spiritual message* and ministry even from our Lord Himself. It may be that Great Britain has been so swept with the tide of materialism and love of pleasure and the cult of the flesh that it has not wanted the distinctively Christian message, and has refused the call. Perhaps our Lord would have won His way with Jerusalem, if He could have altered His message, and had humoured and flattered her people instead of lashing them with His rebukes. Do you not see how He hits off the hopeless and obdurate temper of His people in that illustration which He uses of the children playing in the market-place and saying, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept"? Does not that illustration mean at bottom that in whatever vein or whatever

key the spiritual message was addressed to the people of that generation they would refuse to listen to it?

I suggest that this may be so with the men of this generation — that nothing will pierce through their spiritual sloth and slumber, and that it requires the calamity of an awful war to awaken some of them at least to a conception of the seriousness of life. And may you not hope and pray that this great convulsion may lead to a moral and spiritual awakening? That at least should be the hope and the prayer of believing people at this time. I am wondering whether it is not true that the nations now at strife, though nominally Christian, have really refused Christ and forsaken His way.

It is useless to say, as some people are saying, that this war proves that the experiment of Christianity has failed. It would be safe to say that by the majority of people in *England* the experiment has never been seriously tried, and even many of those who have professed the faith have not practised it. How many people on these shores, think you, have definitely made the following of Christ their ruling aim and purpose and passion in life? How many have accepted His call and made Him the King and Lord of life? How many have worshipped

Him, and not self or pleasure or gold? Have you? During how many days during this year has your heart turned to Christ with pure devotion and obedience? On the other hand, how many of us here present have refused His call and His claim? Now what have you got in Germany? A philosophy that emphatically repudiates the teachings of Jesus and flatly contradicts it; that cries, "Blessed are the war-makers"; that worships force and pride and culture, and says, "By these, and by conquest, a nation must live." And what have you had in France for a generation? A practical and growing atheism, a gospel of materialism and pleasure. And I venture to affirm my own sorrowful conviction that we are at war to-day because the nations have refused the call of Christ and have forsaken His way.

The next answer to the question why Christ wept on that day so long ago over the City of Doom was because of the profound ignorance and delusion of her people. It was the ignorance of people who *thought they knew*, which is the most hopeless ignorance in the world, and of people who were *proud* in their fancied knowledge. The last thing they thought was that a plain and technically unlearned peasant could teach them anything. If they had seen

and heard the Lord that day, they would have smiled contemptuously at His tears, and with easy self-confidence would have assured Him that they were well able to take care of themselves.

You see of what they are ignorant. *The things that belong to peace.* What do you suppose they thought were the things that belonged to peace? What gave them on that sunny day a sense of security? Well, I suppose it was their fancied superiority, their great enlightenment as compared with other nations first of all. Also their thought, that they were the favourites of Heaven—the chosen and elect people. And to the very last, we are told, even when the Romans were thundering at their gates and casting up the banks for the siege of Jerusalem, they clung to the belief that it was impossible for *them* to be overthrown.

But what are the things that belong to peace? Do we know them to-day? Do' the nations know them? Is it an overwhelming army? Is it culture, profound learning? Is it conquering a nation and holding it under by force? Will you make a desolation, and call that peace? Can you have peace while there is a smouldering fire of resentment at injustice, oppression, and wrong?

What belongs to peace? Does not justice essentially, and right and straightforward dealing, and honour, and truth, and chivalry, and good faith?

And what belongs to peace in the individual? I mean what is essentially necessary to it? Not plenty and easy circumstances and good health. Surely, in the words of St. Paul, a conscience void of offence; a consciousness of duty honestly attempted; a daily endeavour to do the will of God, however difficult that will may be. What is essential to peace again? Absence of envy, hatred, malice, and selfish ambition—a mind in harmony with the will of God, a spirit reconciled to Him. And what else—in all the strife of the moment, in the desolating sense of failure that sweeps over the soul, all the uncertainty of these times, with loved ones far away and imperilled? Surely a consciousness of the eternal and changeless love of God encompassing us as the atmosphere encompasses us and will ever encompass us, and in which we may securely rest both in life and death.

What is that, my friends, but saying that the way to peace is the whole-hearted acceptance of Christ, who is our peace, and being filled with His spirit of love to God and men?

The other thing of which Jerusalem was

ignorant and quite blind to was *the time of her visitation*. She was absolutely blind to the glory of the Son of God and blind to the crisis in her national history that was created by His coming.

May I not suggest that a like blindness often falls upon men? Was it not amazing that the Eternal Son of God should walk among men and appeal to them, and that His appeal should be unrecognised and rejected?

But is it not always a remarkable thing? Do you not think it an amazing thing that men should go through such a convulsive time as we are now in, and recognise no appeal of God in it? That men should celebrate the birth of the Holy Son of God with drunken orgies? That they should go out to the field of battle, and know in the trenches that death may pick them off at any moment, and have no prayer in their hearts? Is it not almost as amazing that men can drift on through the years, watching them come and go, knowing the uncertainty of life, with indifference?

May I not urge upon you this certain fact that Christ the Lord is appealing to you as truly as He appealed to Jerusalem in that last week of His life—knocking at the door of your heart, and asking to bring therein His blessed reign

of peace? May we not see a parable in this great and moving incident, whose interpretation is this—that the way of refusal and rejection of Christ is the sure way to destruction; that now is the time of the visitation of some of us; that the Love that came down at Christmas is appealing to us—the Love that wept bitterly over Jerusalem, and the Love that cannot save you apart from your own consent and your own yielding. I wonder how you are going to close this year, this most memorable year. Believe me, the thing that vitally matters is whether you will close it a friend and follower of Christ or a rejecter. To delay longer may be delay for ever. Of this time more than almost any other it may be said, “Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” I read a sentence from Luscombe Hull on Christmas Eve which immensely impressed me: “Within the secret temple of every man’s heart stands erected one of two crosses—the cross on which he crucifies himself, or the cross on which in rejecting truth he crucifies Christ.”

Which will you do? You know what Jerusalem elected, and the day when it crucified the Son of God sealed its own doom.

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While you delay, you are really deciding. Deferring the right is really choosing the wrong. You even may bring tears to the heart of Christ. You may seal your own doom and dispeace, which may God in His mercy forbid.

I pray, most holy Saviour, that I may not resist Thine appeal or Thy pleading. From self-will and self-righteousness and self-satisfaction be pleased to deliver me. I do confess that I have often grieved and disappointed Thee. Forgive me, and grant that I may know the day of my visitation and the things that make for peace. Let not the day of grace go by slighted by me or by any of those dear to me. But grant that we may all respond to Thy loving call. For Thy Name's sake. *Amen.*

IX

ENTERPRISE AND STEADFASTNESS

“Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters.”—ISA. xxxii. 20.

I AM finding just now considerable profit for my own soul, guidance, inspiration, rebuke, and comfort from the prophet Isaiah. His writings might almost be called a tract for the times. Change the names from Eastern to Western, and they might apply to ourselves. He too lived in critical times. His little nation was on the verge of a dark shadow. Troublous and convulsive times lay ahead, and again and again his heart trembled for his people and the sifting and testing through which they had to pass.

We know how through all he was the prophet of hope and not the prophet of doom. He saw the thick black shadow, but he saw through it into the light. He saw the dread scourge passing over his nation, and he knew

it must suffer, but beyond that he saw his nation purified and free and exultant. He saw the crumbling and passing of strong and boastful powers which were sweeping over the peoples of the earth and misusing their strength, and he saw too the Lord of Hosts Himself mingling in the fight and carrying out His own purposes through it.

For example, you get pictures in this chapter of terror and brightness, the intermediate and the ultimate—a picture of what a man may be to other men, and what one feels that Isaiah must have been to many in his time: “A hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest—as rivulets of water in a dry place—as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” And that is what our Lord can be and wants to be to us all in this time of national anxiety.

There is, he says, a wonderful time coming. He is a man of vision, and on the far horizon he can discern it. The picture he draws of it makes your heart almost sick with longing. Justice and righteousness everywhere. The wilderness, made so by war, a garden land; the work of righteousness, peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever. The people living in peaceable and quiet habitations, sure dwellings, and happy resting-places.

But before that the swirling storm, the convulsion, and the great devastation—the winter before the spring.

Then, as I understand him in this last verse, he seems to say, whatever the circumstances be—of calm or storm, of convulsion or peace—there is a certain legitimate work which ought to be done. Happy are the people who do it, *who sow beside all waters*. That is, as I take it, to these agricultural and not manufacturing people, there is land to be tilled and sown whatever the weather and whatever the outlook. The figure of agriculture is one which is employed constantly throughout the Bible and in our modern speech for all kinds of moral and spiritual effort. You can well see its appropriateness here. Whatever happens, if people are to live, the fields of the world have to be tilled. People must eat if they are to live; and if they are to eat, the eating must be prepared for. When certain sorts of calamity are brewing, there is need for redoubled energy in tilling and sowing.

So I interpret this text, and I think I make legitimate use of it when I say and urge it earnestly, the business of the Kingdom of Christ is something which must never under any circumstances or under any conditions be suspended.

It is the vital necessity. Wherever you are, and whatever is happening, that must be carried on.

You may stop some things, as amusements or even some industries; you must not stop cultivating and sowing the fields of grain. There is more need of that than ever.

We are great on the Empire just now, and that is well. Do not let Christian people forget, however, that in war and in peace they are citizens of a spiritual kingdom, and they are in loyalty bound to conserve and further its interests, and to labour and spend and sacrifice when those interests are imperilled, and they may be imperilled now. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." How shall I interpret and apply that? To those who are faithful everywhere, who carry the influence of a Christian character and Christian principles and Christian activity too everywhere; who are not only ready to fight the Germans, but to fight the devil—that is, to fight wrong, within and without, and to be simply Christian everywhere.

Suppose the seed to be sown be that of Christian influence and Christian effort. Suppose it to be of total abstinence from strong drink. Suppose it to be cleanness of speech and kindness and helpfulness. Suppose it to be bearing witness for Christ, commending His service and urging

His claims. Suppose it to be an example of prayerful and holy living. "Blessed are ye that sow beside *all* waters"—not merely the official waters, not Christian in one place and pagan in another. Not confining your Christian effort to certain days and occasions and places as the precincts of the church, but carrying it everywhere, into business and pleasure, and domestic and social and political life. Not being Christian in patches and streaks, but through and through.

For example, be the same men in the camp and the barracks and the battlefield as you were in the church and the Sunday school. You have only transferred your energies to another field, and they must still be Christian and Christianly directed.

If in order to become a soldier you had to cease to be a Christian, if you had to leave your Christian principles behind when you put on the King's uniform, I should say that no man ought ever to go. And that is not only not necessary, it would be a disaster of the first magnitude. If in his enthusiasm to be loyal to King or to comrade a man becomes disloyal to Christ and ashamed of His colours, then surely he comes near to treachery, if he have not already sunk to the depths of it.

For myself, I see an immense and most fruitful field of service for our young men who have joined the forces; an enormous field for the display of fine Christian manhood, pure, clean, strong. The elevation of the British Army by the introduction into it of men who do not curse and swear, but who are clean of speech; men who are not ashamed to pray and to read their Bible and confess their faith, and who are no more ashamed of their Christian colours than of the colours of their regiment. *Sow by all waters*—secular, commercial, and military. By them all do the will of God and seek His Kingdom and seek it first.

But I would apply the idea also to those fields of service in which we are wont to toil and where the circumstances so greatly differ.

“All waters” means rough and smooth waters, under the dark cloud of difficulty and discouragement and failure, or under the brilliant sunshine of encouragement, appreciation, and success; in the backwater of an obscure place where the scenery is commonplace and unattractive or where the soil is poor and thin and will bear a scanty crop, or in the well-known spot where many visitors come, where the tide of life flows swiftly, and life itself is full of interest and excitement. Blessed are ye that so sow when people respond

and when they do not—concerning whom it will have to be said, whatever else may be said or written, He was a faithful labourer. In season and out of season, when it was convenient and when it was inconvenient, when the days were hard and evil and when they were smooth and good, when the clouds gathered and when the sun shone, when the shadow of war was over the land and in the piping times of peace, when men smiled and when they frowned, he was always the same—diligent, earnest, faithful, doing the will of God ; by example and speech blessing and helping men, and directing them to Jesus Christ.

I think, under other circumstances than those in which we meet to-day, I might give another turn to the text and pronounce its benediction on that *Christian enterprise* which sees in every land the prospective field of Christian influence, and of a Christian harvest ; on those who sow not only beside their own waters, the waters of their own neighbourhood or country, but the waters of poor neighbourhoods, and darkened lands, and lands where stretch many and many a league of moral wilderness or swamp ; who lift up their eyes from the land where sowers are abundant to the places where they are scarce, and in response to the call from some

Macedonia, "Come over and help us," go forth to other lands, or send others forth with their gifts and blessings, to insert into its soil the seed of Christian example and influence and the word of the Gospel, the seed for all lands. Blessed, thrice blessed surely, are they who look not only on their own waters but over them to the other shores and send there the sowers and their seed.

But I am particularly anxious to get out of my text the lesson for the day, which seems to me to be that of *constancy* in ordinary duty under extraordinary circumstances. That the circumstances of the hour are extraordinary no one could question, and undoubtedly they bring and impose upon us extraordinary duties and claims and consequent strain. The unusual is happening, and in thousands of instances, in obedience to what they believe to be the higher call of their country, men have dropped their ordinary avocations in the mill and the office, the warehouse and school and university, and vacated their posts of Christian service. There is just a little danger of depreciating those who remain to carry forward the necessary work, the more prosaic and less adventurous work of commerce and agriculture and the work of the home.

What I want to urge particularly is that by these waters where we are at the present, these extraordinary waters with their extraordinary excitement and agitation, we should go on sowing the seed—that the ordinary activities of the Church should not be allowed to flag. I was greatly impressed with a sentence in the *Daily Chronicle* from one of its war correspondents last week. After advising his readers not to credit sensational reports but to believe that every man from top to bottom is doing his best and that the end is not doubtful, he says, “Let us concentrate our minds upon the civilian duties which are as necessary as any to the strength of the State.” It is very difficult, because the excitement is great and civilian duties are rather at a discount just now, but it is absolutely necessary.

Because you are helping to house and feed the homeless or destitute Belgians, you must not neglect the destitute and needy Londoners. While thinking of their orphan children, you will not lose sight of the orphans sheltered for years by the ordinary orphanages. It would be a poor and miserable policy to let the ordinary philanthropies of the Church suffer because you were busy about the extraordinary—for a man to let his own relatives want in order to supply

the wants of strangers. And there is just the danger of that. We have such a curious strain in us that we are inclined to drop the ordinary and the routine for the novel and the adventurous, so that it is possible for a man to give money to some of the various national funds which ought to have been devoted to the payment of his tailor's or grocer's bill.

Far be it from me to suggest that the Belgians should not be helped and that the extra should not be done in extraordinary times, but my plea is that we must not slough the ordinary responsibilities in order to take up the extraordinary. There are things which are always with us, to be done at all times. The land must be cultivated whatever happens. You may not withdraw your subscriptions from foreign missions to buy comforts for the soldiers, nor stop your gifts to the ordinary Christian work in order to send tobacco to the troops, or even Gospels. Send what you can, embrace the extraordinary opportunities, but not at the cost of the others. These things ye ought to do and not to leave the other undone. These are really the first charge upon the resources of the Church.

But of all these nothing is or can be more important than the Sunday schools. In one way no institution of the Church has been more

affected by the War. Its teaching staff—one is never quite able to see why it is so completely the case—is very largely composed of young people. One is never quite able to understand how it is that so commonly people relinquish this delightful work as their years multiply, but so it is, and all through our country the boys' classes in our schools have in many instances been deprived of their teachers. But the work must go on. The Christian instruction of our young people was never more needed than now, and while one hopes and believes that our young men, who have been compelled to give it up for the time being, will come back to it, it must be laid upon the heart of the Church that our children be not neglected, that the duty and glory of the Christian life and the meaning of Christian citizenship be impressed upon them, and the claims of Christ be presented to them in the days of their youth.

While we are praying for our army to-day we will not forget the great army of Sunday-school teachers recruited in our own land from the ranks of the older folk.

I state there was never more need of the Gospel than now—the teaching of Christ's Gospel of redemption, of comfort, and of hope. In the softened and chastened mood of the nation it

should be preached with redoubled energy. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters—that say, whatever happens, success or failure, victory or defeat, This has to be done, and must not at our peril be neglected.

For what is the seed we have to sow? It is the seed of truth, truth as it is in Jesus, and it is suited for all soils, and all zones, and all atmospheres, and all races and nations and ages, and I repeat it was never more needed than now. The Gospel of peace as against war should be insistently preached just now, for while we are compelled to this present awful conflict there is that in the breast of most of us which recoils and sickens at the spectacle of men bent on the destruction of life and property, maiming and shattering and slaughtering each other—a feeling that it is absolutely unchristian at bottom and ought never to be. And there is need to protest while we are compelled, and because we are compelled. Though it may seem a strange thing to some, I want to urge Christians that this is the hour to preach the Gospel of love and sacrifice as against the doctrine of the mailed fist and of conquest by force; the Gospel of the chivalrous defence of the weak, and not their crushing destruction; the Gospel of kindness, and mercy, and service of others, rather than the glorifica-

tion of culture, cleverness, knowledge, and power ; the Gospel whose centre is a cross of sacrifice, and whose great teaching is that we are here not to conquer and subdue and rule, but to serve and help and save. We are to sow this seed beside all waters—that is, at all times and in all hearts. And the sowing will not be in vain. My own firm belief is that when this terrible time is over men will come back to this as the only hope for a disordered world.

Meanwhile let us pray that it be sown in our own hearts and bring forth its precious fruits in all our lives.

Lord, we bless Thee for the benediction pronounced on all faithful sowing and all honest effort to bring Thy Kingdom nearer. Uphold all discouraged workers by Thy grace, we humbly beseech Thee. Preserve them from weariness in well-doing, and in the day of storm and darkness keep them faithful. May none of us miss the harvest through unbelief. Through Jesus Christ, Thy Son. *Amen.*

X

AFRAID TO ASK

“ They understood not the saying, and they were afraid to ask Him.”—MARK ix. 32.

THE saying which they did not understand was the saying which, according to the previous verse, the Lord continued to reiterate in their hearing, namely, that He should be delivered up and killed. He kept on telling them that, and it simply bewildered and mystified them. They did not understand, partly because they did not want to understand. The saying smote them in the face as it were, and they resented it. It was most unwelcome, and in their judgment unnecessary. Why should it be? You know what you say about a certain course of procedure which vexes and pains you, on the part of some of your friends: “ I *cannot* understand it ; it is simply beyond me. Why on earth he should want to do this thing puzzles me.” And in many such cases you do not want to understand—you

have not tried. It is simply a mad course in your judgment, and all you want to do is to turn your friend from it. Now that was just where the disciples were. The sayings of the Master cut right across their plans, and simply frustrated and put an end to all their hopes. Why could not their present relations continue with their growing delight? Why should they be broken up? Why should their hopes of a coming Kingdom and glory which had surely been heightened by the marvel of the Transfiguration be flung to the winds?

Why should this something dreadful which He was predicting be allowed to happen? Why should wicked men be allowed to work their will? Why could not His strong hand prevent it? They were much too impatient and too distressed and disturbed to listen calmly to what their Master was saying. And you will remember that Peter had taken Him aside and had presumed to rebuke Him and to declare that this should never be, and that therefore He should cease talking about it.

You see what the saying had been—the startling saying that He was to be killed; not merely to die—to be called away—but to *be killed*, and not only killed but *crucified*, the most abhorred death that the cruel imagination

of man could conceive up to that time. The very thought of it was a shuddering agony. It is not death but the manner of death that has to be taken into account on the battlefield and elsewhere. To be killed instantly is one thing, to be tortured with asphyxiating gases or to be left wounded lying out between the lines in long-drawn-out agony, fills you with horror and is enough to cow the stoutest heart.

So though the Lord broke the dread news to these men as gently as possible—as gently as a wise mother would break unpleasant tidings to her children—it had to be broken; and when the word “crucified” followed the words “suffer many things,” it was more than enough. Nothing that could be said could mitigate that. That grim and horrific fact stood right in the way, awful and terrifying. Crucified? What could be done for or by a man who had been crucified amid the triumphant jeers of his enemies? What could that mean but the ruin of his cause? Unless that ugly fact could be removed out of the way, what hope could there be? They understood not the saying, and they were afraid to ask Him.

What you have, therefore, in these verses is one person fearlessly and masterfully facing an on-coming shadow, an awful trial, and the

others refusing. Ah! but you know about that. Nothing is commoner than the refusal of people to face an unwelcome and unpleasant situation, or fact, or possibility. You say, I don't believe it and I won't believe it, and consequently when it comes you are unprepared for it. How many people dread seeing a doctor, and put it off and off, afraid of an unwelcome truth; and if that truth should be declared they are inconsolable. Here is something lying ahead of you—the breaking of some relationship, the parting from someone you value, the removal from a neighbourhood, and the question is asked, Have you made the necessary arrangements? Have you looked into the matter? You know full well how you defer and shelve the hated thing until you are obliged to take the necessary steps.

I wonder how many people honestly and squarely face the fact that these men were asked to face, namely, the fact of death? Even of those men who so bravely and devotedly face it on the field of battle how many actually face what it means, not to the body but to the soul?

You wonder at these disciples, but may it not be affirmed that when one has uttered the word death he has spoken the word that you avoid and shrink from? And if it were uttered concerning your child, would it not be the last word?

Would it be any use talking to you about heaven, with its peace and rest and ineffable joy, and its fountains and rivers of the water of life? You have said the word death, and the ears are deaf to every other word that may be said. "Because I have said these things unto you," said our Lord, "sorrow hath filled your heart." It does not matter what else He says now. Think for a moment of it. Here is this mysterious fact or possibility of death facing every one of us and our children, and it is so unwelcome that we refuse to probe its depths and to see what it means in the light of the teaching and experience of Jesus Christ, and when it comes the common experience is that we are bewildered and distressed and grief-stricken.

They were afraid, so the text says. You may conclude that they were *partly afraid of Him*. You remember what is said of Him shortly after this, namely, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and that as His disciples followed they were afraid. Afraid of what? Of Him—of the whole atmosphere surrounding Him at that moment—of His manifest absorption in His divine and mysterious passion and purpose. Do you not understand that? Does not a certain awe gather over your spirit as you see some great soul marching on alone and unshaken,

to meet or to bear some great burden of sorrow or suffering or sacrifice? Is there not about him some majestic aloofness which you dare not invade, and which makes you in a way afraid of him? And the fear of the disciples would be surely augmented by the consciousness that their Master was nursing the thoughts which they had refused to share. He was brooding over some great plan and purpose. He was treading the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none to help Him. There was something about His very appearance which denoted the greatness of the issue.

You do not detract from the Divinity of Christ when you affirm your belief in His proper humanity. He is as truly Son of man as Son of God, and as such one is immensely impressed with His evident craving for sympathy as the hour of His supreme crisis drew nearer. It was not only for their sake that He wanted to talk to the disciples about His passion, but in some measure at least for His own sake. Do you not believe that it would have been an infinite relief to talk over this great matter with some human friend? Unless it be so, I am at a loss to see where the force of His example comes in. And I fail to understand the meaning of His request to the three men, "My soul is exceeding sorrow-

ful, even unto death. Tarry ye here and watch with Me." You cannot read that without feeling that it would have been an infinite comfort to Christ to have had these men near, to have had their understanding in a measure, and their sympathy—even as a wise and strong mother may be sustained and comforted by the touch and the sympathy of her little child. And it is clear that these men failed the Lord. They refused to face the issue, and when it came they collapsed—hope and confidence and assurance *all collapsed*. They were afraid to ask Him lest their worst fears should be confirmed and their hopes should be quashed.

But will you not conclude that their stubborn refusal to face the situation which their Master desired to lay before them was both foolish and wrong? Suppose they had listened patiently, hearing the Lord right through to the end—not taking fright at the words, "suffering and death." They would have heard that these were not the last words, they but indicated the dark passage leading to the chamber of light—the conflict leading to a great defeat of the enemy, and the blessed victory of life and love. If they had listened and faced the situation, they would have seen that death was not the terribly hopeless and final calamity which they had deemed it;

it was the captivity which He was going to lead captive, the strong man armed whom He the stronger Man would bind. If they had listened and asked questions and said to their Master, "Now tell us as much as we are able to comprehend about the meaning and purpose of this dreadful experience," that would never have happened which did happen when the crisis came. And you know what that was. They thought the end had come. The Master was dead, and there was an end of everything. There was no future for Him or His cause, or for them. If they had listened and asked their questions and faced firmly the coming trial, they would have been calm when it fell. They would have said at once, This is not the end; this is the way—the prelude to the most marvellous happening the world has ever known or will know. They would have heard and remembered that it is only by His death that sin can be purged, and only through death that that life can be reached which is beyond the touch of death for evermore.

Now these are the lessons that seem to me to arise from this incident :

(1) That we should pray for grace and courage to enable us to face and contemplate and investigate unwelcome and inevitable things. It is

neither the path of wisdom nor courage nor faith to shrink from or avoid them. You may not understand, but you should not be afraid to ask and to investigate, to think and inquire.

(2) Wherever these are frankly faced, there almost invariably is seen to be some good in them, hidden it may be, and in some measure problematical, and contingent upon our own behaviour, but there it is—the possibility of suffering, pain, and death working out some great good and blessing to men.

(3) The third lesson surely is that we should fix our eyes on this good, never letting it go out of our sight. The surgical operation is a fearsome thing and perilous, but the hope of the issue is the straight limb, the removal of a terrible incubus, deliverance from incessant and unbearable pain. Says Peter to people who are suffering, "Gird up the loins of your mind and set your hope perfectly on the grace which is to be brought to you." It is only by thinking of the joyous welcome that awaits you at the end of your journey that you have heart for the long and weary road. And it is the contemplation of that which feeds your courage and your power of endurance. You know what Paul says, and you see where he is when he says it, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present

time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And again, of troubles that would otherwise have crushed him, "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory—while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen and which are eternal."

You know what is said of the old prophets. They prophesied beforehand not only the sufferings of Christ but the glories that should follow them. And you must never forget the glories.

You remember, finally, what is said about our blessed Lord: "For the joy that was set before Him He endured the Cross." That was where His eyes were fixed. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." If these men, therefore, had been willing to hear and not afraid to ask, they would have got a glimpse of the glories that were to be. They would have known and realised that they were in the presence of a stupendous transaction and achievement, that was going to issue in the redemption of the world.

My brethren, I do not know how we can endure if we look no further than the dreadful experiences through which the nations are now passing. If all you can see is this appalling struggle, sway-

ing now this way and now that, your heart will grow sick with despair and horror. But if you see beyond it to a better life for the nations of Europe, a better world for men to live in, free from the dark and threatening menace which has overshadowed this and other nations, a world chastened and cleansed of its lust of pleasure and greed of gain, its luxury and gross materialism, your own dear liberties preserved and sealed to you, and a federation of the great nations of the world on a basis of peace, then you can endure. I dare not look at the suffering of the world save as I believe in and can see the benefits that flow from suffering, the patience and unselfishness and sacrifice that are born of it, and save as I believe with all my heart that God has some wise and gracious purpose in permitting it, and that His wisdom overrules it all.

Blessed Lord, make me patient and trustful. When Thy words are far beyond my understanding and full of mystery, may my faith in Thy goodness and wisdom not fail. Make me willing to patiently hear and always to obey. For Thy Name's sake. *Amen.*

XI

THE COMPLAINT AND THE REMEDY

“ And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove ! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. . . . Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee : He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”—Ps. lv. 6, 22.

ANY reader of the Hebrew Psalter must be profoundly impressed with the strain of human weariness which runs through many of the psalms. How many of them are pitched in a minor key ! How many of them are cries of distress, and some of them of remonstrance and rebellion against what has become an intolerable situation, or cries for deliverance coming from the depths of a strained and troubled heart that can endure no longer ! How often you come upon the cry which must be rising from Antwerp and Brussels just now, writhing under the oppressive rule of the hated invader and conqueror, “ How long, O Lord, how long ? ” And that other urgent cry betokening a desperate situation, “ O

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Lord, make haste, make haste to help me. Make no tarrying, O my God."

Many of the psalms are indeed songs of sorrow and distress, and one is impressed with the great number of them in which the author is surrounded with bitter and malignant, unscrupulous and cruel enemies. Presuming for a moment that the authors of the psalms were right in their heart and purpose, and bent on getting right done, you cannot help feeling what a wicked world they lived in ! What a mass of opposition they encountered in their endeavour to 'live lives of integrity and uprightness. How bitterly they were hated. How constantly they were in a state of war. This psalm is very like the majority of the psalms of the first two books—the writer is simply ringed around with treacherous and evil-minded enemies. I take some words out of it : " oppression, iniquity, violence, mischief, wickedness, guile, bloodthirsty and deceitful men." And these expressions are quite common in the psalms. This was the kind of artillery, apparently, with which the saints of those times were bombarded. Yet it is scarcely to be wondered at if now and then they reply with the same kind of weapon, and flash back a retort that is not free from bitterness and even from revenge and loathing. They are but human after all, and if men

in Christian times can sing their hymns of hate, it is scarcely to be wondered at if the suppressed fire of hatred and scorn in the breasts of men in those old days breaks through and pours itself out upon a wicked enemy.

But equally often, or more often, you come across what I have called the utterly weary mood, and you have it here in the sixth verse. Nothing is so wearying as strife after all, and especially to the heart that loves peace. And it is evident that you have a man with such a heart, compelled to that which he really hates and weary of it all, longing for some way out. Some artist has tried to embody this verse in a picture. He has represented a weary king on the roof of his palace watching a flight of doves in the light of the setting sun, on their way from the violence and strife of the city, leaving it all behind them, for the solitude and peace of the wilderness.

Neither the painting nor Mendelssohn's wonderful music does full justice to the picture of the psalm. You have really a man who, as you would say, is losing his nerve. He is in danger of collapse. Fearfulness and trembling and a horror of great darkness have seized him. He is not only weary but afraid: "Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, horror has overwhelmed me." He has fallen into a fit of depression, as even strong men

may—terrified by their responsibilities and difficulties. A brave servant of Christ whose name is well known all over this country in connection with Christian enterprise said to me some time ago, “ I am sometimes frightened when I think of the responsibilities I have undertaken and what would happen if this or that were to fail, and it seems sometimes to come very near to failure.”

One can quite imagine David in later life in the midst of his kingly cares and responsibilities, with danger from without threatening the fair fabric of the kingdom which he had built up, and perhaps greater danger from within ; with men like Shimei ready to curse him, and other men—his own son among them—plotting for his throne ; with discord and murderous strife even in his own household, uttering a sigh such as this. You can well understand men in prominent and responsible position in the State just now—our Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, our Generals and Admirals, knowing the critical position of the affairs of Empire and how much depends on their decisions—sometimes longing to escape from the almost crushing burden, envying the light-hearted birds that carry no responsibility beyond themselves and can fly away wherever they wish.

Yet it is not only—allow me to say—people

who have crushing responsibilities such as these who feel this longing, but people who are fallen on evil times, who are faced by misfortune and loss of position and reputation; proud, sensitive spirits who dread having to acknowledge failure; and sometimes people who are harassed by their perplexities, and sometimes people who are irritated and humiliated in their work every day; or people who have done wrong and are faced with the bitter consequences of their wrong, with exposure and shame and disgrace.

How many people there are who from one cause or another feel themselves to be in an intolerable situation and long with an unspeakable longing to be away from it all—to get somewhere into some quiet place, some abode of peace, some lodge in some vast wilderness, out of the racket and the strife. We talk of being afraid of death, I honestly believe that there are many people far more afraid of life. “If only one could conveniently die,” said a sorely tried person to me a few days ago. Of course it all means that, here and there, people get a greater burden than they can carry, and sometimes it is laid upon them by the providence of God. They could not with honour have escaped it. They chose it even as our Lord chose the cross, though at the time they never realised how heavy it would

prove to be. After all there is something very honourable and noble and splendid, and satisfying to the soul, in carrying a burden, accepting your share of the responsibility of things, doing your part. It adds both to the depth and the dignity of life.

And then, getting away might not mean the peace that you think: it might mean exchanging the ills you have for others that are even worse. The wilderness is very well for a bird or a beast of prey, or even for a temporary sojourn; but its solitude and freedom from all responsibility is not the permanent place for a man to live, who was not made after all to hide away from his fellows, but whose shoulders were made for a burden and his heart for sympathy with other men. Is man hiding from the stormy wind and tempest always a dignified or an edifying spectacle? Is it not nobler to be out battling with it, and rescuing other and weaker souls from it?

But is the wilderness always the place of peace which it appears? Has it not its own peculiar terrors? I have known men who for years were longing for the time to come when they could exchange the strain and racket of a city's life for the quiet of the village, and when the time actually came the quiet of the village, its stagnation and dullness in the winter months, with its

gossip and scandal and mean and narrow life, vexed and tried their souls far more than the alert and eager life of the town had done.

I remember, in one of my summer vacations, coming across a house which appeared to be a typical abode of peace—standing amid corn-fields, with climbing roses and honeysuckle and fruit trees on its walls, with a picturesque wind-mill close at hand. I remember the longing for such a place, and to my amazement discovering before I left that there was no peace in that house. Its occupant was distracted with business worries, and died afterwards—doubtless of care and disappointment.

Is it not true often that the source and cause of a man's weariness is in himself, and he cannot escape from himself? And, moreover, is it not true that a man does not escape from himself even by death? There is nothing that looks so quiet as the grave until you remember that the man is not there—that the living soul of him is elsewhere, thinking, remembering, feeling, still face to face with its naked self, still bearing the burden and responsibility of existence and of conduct! Who dare say that there are not agonies on the other side of death?—as there may be joys of which the present are but faint images and symbols.

Am I not coming to the truth of the matter when I affirm that what we really need and should cry for is not escape but sufficiency, strength, fortitude, courage to face and endure and master? And this seems to be the message of verse 22. Out of the mystery and silence of the unseen there comes this answer. There is help nearer at hand than the wilderness—you have no need to sigh for wings to carry you away from your present surroundings. You cannot escape without cowardice and dishonour, but you can endure. You may not be removed from the zone of battle, but the weapons hurtling through the air shall not harm you. God will be your shield. That, I think, is the meaning of so many expressions in the Psalms which declare that God is rock and refuge, shield and buckler, defence and high tower. “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him.” That does not mean absence of danger, but presence and sufficiency of defence. It does not mean absence of trouble and care, but victory over them. Listen to this sublime confidence: “In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion, in the secret of His tent shall He hide me. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies.” That means shelter and victory. To have had a share in the hardships and hazards of the present campaign—

to have borne a part in defending our dear land against the power that threatened its safety and freedom and its very existence, though it be with wounds and scars—were far to be preferred to keeping out of it all, though you preserved a whole skin and all your comforts. To have endured, to have held on with patience and fidelity unbroken, to have faced the storm, to have carried the cross after Jesus, to have borne the trouble bravely, is far finer than never to have had it.

To have conquered is far better than to have hidden away and been kept safe. And here is the way. You have not to carry the burden alone—the burden of trouble, of responsibility, of anxiety. A man may discover that God bears the heavier part of it. I do not hesitate to say that the burden of the consequences of wrong-doing is a burden which God bears and shares with the truly penitent man. Surely that is the meaning of the cross of Calvary—that our Lord bears the penalty of a man's sin, all the agony and shame of it.

Ah, if men would only remember that side of the great mystery of redeeming love when they are doing everything, resorting to every kind of device and dodge to avoid the legitimate consequences of their own misdeeds—excusing,

justifying, prevaricating, lying, and denying, lest they should suffer some loss of esteem, and when they cry out and beg to be shielded from the disgrace, and even take their lives because they say they could not face the shame. Oh, if they could remember the fact that Christ had faced and borne the shame and horror of the consequences of sins that were not His own, that no one has been disgraced as He was in the sight of the world! And you may surely conclude that He is with, and will give His peace to, every true penitent who confesses his wrong; and that it is far, far better to confess and bear the consequences than to hide and deny and escape.

But how can I cast my burden on the Lord? It can only be as men make the constant effort to realise God and to pray to Him.

When my boy has told me all the trouble of his heart, and he knows that I understand and sympathise, he has cast his burden on me. When I have told my anxiety and fear and distress to my friend who understands me, I have cast my burden on him. You know what I say under these circumstances! I say that I have *unburdened* my mind. He has got my secret, and it is an infinite relief to me that he is thinking and caring, and what is more—he sustains me. His sympathy is like another hand pushing the

heavy load up the hill. It makes the difficulty look less. I have somebody who knows and understands and cares and will speak up for me.

Oh, men and women, if we only knew it, God is nearer and more real than that. These old saints and seers put us to shame by their clear vision of the reality of God. I do not know how you and I are going to bear the strain of these days without God—and we were never meant to bear it. Let us emphasise that. We were never meant to live without God and His fellowship and His sustaining grace, and we deserve all the distress of mind we get if we try to live without Him. That is the tragic mistake which some of us are making. We are so afraid of trouble and hurt and inconvenience and duty because we have no God. What we want is not the wings of a dove to fly away, but vision to see that right where we are God is, offering to us His love and grace. I do not know what your burden is, but your responsibility is limited. On the authority of the whole Bible I have to declare God's care for you, that your burden is His burden and His business, and He will never, never fail the heart that trusts Him.

XII

THE VISION OF GOD FOR DAYS OF GLOOM

"And the Lord said, Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock."—Ex. xxxiii. 21.

THIS is a record of the strange, mystic, and incomprehensible experience which came to Moses, who is called in the title of the 90th Psalm, "The man of God." When I call it incomprehensible, I am referring to the body and not the soul of the narrative, to the material and not the spiritual aspects of it. Such demonstrations of the Divine presence and power as a bush on fire and unconsumed, a sea or stream divided, manna falling from heaven, are not vouchsafed to us. Nor is there a ledge of rock on any mountain where we may obtain a physical vision of God, save indeed as we see it in the glory of the springtime, the sublimity of the mountain, and the wonder of the sea.] It is very likely that to some of us when we have got alone with nature

—by the sea, on the deck of a ship, or in some rural spot—we have felt the mysterious presence of God surrounding our souls, and a sense of awe and wonder. It may be that it is by the light of some such experience that we must interpret those mysterious communings with God, those dialogues with the Divine which we read took place in the experience, not indeed of the multitude, but of the elect souls of Old Testament history.

What is necessary is that we should penetrate through the husk to the kernel of these stories. It is impossible for us to project ourselves into the circumstances, but the soul of the narrative we may and should grasp, for it is that which belongs to us, and to all the races and ages of men that struggle, often in very dim light, across the perplexing stage of this earthly life.

This is the one thing that stands out from this early narrative. A man may perceive God, the Author and Creator of all things; may become vividly conscious of His reality and of His nature; may hold intercourse with God as truly as with his fellow-men, may be as sure of the one as of the other. The great thing for us and for all men concerning Moses is not the burning bush, nor the plagues of Egypt, nor the riven rock, nor the manifold miracles, but this—"The Lord

spake with Moses face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend"; and Tennyson means the same thing when he says :

"Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with Spirit will meet,
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet."

The thing I want to know is : Is there, in the spiritual sphere, a place by God to-day where a man may stand in the soul of him as upon a solid rock, and see His glory, which is His goodness, His mercy and truth ?

I believe that is what many want to know—*i.e.* whether, as Mr. Balfour says in his Gifford Lectures, they can surely reckon on God. We are to think of that now—and we call to our mind the experience of this great soul who has made so deep an impression on the whole course of human history.

We remember that, as in the case of so many of the outstanding characters in the Bible, his ministry began, after a long preparation, *with a vision of God* in the mysterious burning bush, as the mission of Isaiah did in another form, and as that of St. Paul began with what may be called a personal interview with the living Christ. And that vision means in the heart of it a great creative, spiritual experience, a great conscious-

ness of the reality of the unseen and the spiritual. And what needs to be affirmed is that that experience is not confined to select souls or to days of old. The methods of revelation and perception of God may differ. The stories of *how* men became aware of God told to the childhood of the race may differ very greatly from how men become conscious of God now. You remember what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Ye," of the new and spiritual dispensation, "are not come unto a mount *that might be touched*," but, "*ye are come*"—as truly as Moses did, though by a different way—"to God, the Judge of all, and ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a *new* covenant." And it is that that matters—the fact, and not the *modus operandi* of it.

And about that fact you will also observe that it was renewed and made fuller as life went on. That is, the revelation of God to a man's soul is not given once for all—some great disclosure of God on the one side and perception of God on the other, which a man is to live on for the rest of his spiritual life. Not that, but the vision repeated, and not only repeated, but growing brighter and clearer and fuller as life passes on. You will remember a part of the message of our Lord to Paul at his conversion was: "To this end

have I appeared unto thee, to make thee a witness —*both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and the things wherein I will appear unto thee.*” Concerning which Matthew Henry, who is rarely quoted by preachers nowadays, says: “Christ now settled a correspondence with Paul, which He designed afterwards to keep up, and only told him now that he should hear further from Him.” So you may say in truth that God never “settles a correspondence” with anybody but He “designs to keep it up.” You may well *remember* and recall a time of spiritual apprehension and exaltation which took place in your life, but you were never intended to live on it. And you cannot live on a memory, even of your conversion; for unless some after-visions of God come to confirm and expand it, you may begin to doubt even it.

Now that brings me to my point in this profoundly interesting narrative. [Moses could not live on the memory of the burning bush or even of the divided sea. He wanted new revelations as he wanted new manna. To-day’s needs are not like yesterday’s. They are often greater and more complex. I speak in perfect reverence when I say: It is of no use your telling me that God went with Israel and overthrew her enemies, and that He inspired prophet and apostle, unless

you can go on to tell me that He goes with men and inspires men to-day. The use of the Bible to me is that it shows me not what has happened but what may happen, what is possible to a man under all skies and in all ages.

It is really not much help to me to remember that God was real and near to me in the days of my youth : it is rather a poignant regret, what the hymn calls an "aching void," if He is not near to me in the day of my greater need.

That is the position of this narrative. Times and circumstances had changed for Moses. The work he had undertaken was proving far more costly and exacting than he had ever dreamed. It was plain that the journey to the Promised Land was not going to be the swift and eager march of an obedient people, glad that they were liberated, and devoted to their Deliverer. It was going to be a long wandering of a rebellious people, who were going to be far more trouble to God, and far more intractable, than seas or rivers or drought. And it was plain to Moses that he could rely on nobody. Aaron and Hur had failed him, Miriam had disappointed him, and the people ransomed from Egypt had relapsed into abominable and shocking idolatry and depravity. It was then, in that dark hour

and under the pressure of a heart-breaking disappointment and strain, that Moses cried out for a new and fuller revelation of God. And this satisfying answer came, "Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock," and the revelation of God's eternal goodness and mercy and justice followed, which was absolutely new at that time. My dear brethren, it is that revelation and assurance which we want in this day, of darkness and dread, of bewilderment and disappointment. It is the thing that matters most—not what *man* is, but what God is. Because things and men pass. . . . This intolerable time will pass, like a terrible dream, but God and the soul abide. What is needed most is to be sure of Him and to be able fully to trust and rest in Him, His love and comfort and grace and goodness. It is the awful doubt of God that is apt to steal into men's souls now, like the chill mists of November, that drives the sunshine off the landscape and makes the world a valley of the shadow of death. What is wanted is a spiritual standing-place—some sure solid footing where a man may see shining through all mysteries the goodness of God, and feel that all the horror and strain of this time has no more altered His love for us than it has changed the love of a mother for her son or a wife for her

husband; and where, moreover, we can see things from God's standpoint. I do not say that such a position would give us peace and joy, but it would give us power to endure, meat to eat that the world knows not of. Not something to help us to forget—to "take the mind off." Not that we should feel less the things that are transpiring around us, but that we should feel more the other realities which abide ~~on~~ unchanged, and be able to stay ourselves upon them.

And there is—I venture to affirm—there is such a place, and if a man will stand there he may get in time that personal vision and consciousness which saved Moses and his work. I hope no one will be disappointed because I have nothing newer to say than this, that ~~that~~ place is the centre of the Gospel, namely, the Cross and Resurrection of our Lord.

Will you allow me to point out to you one or two things that appear quite clear to me as I stand in that place? (1) That God did not prevent evil-minded men from doing their wicked work—Judas possessed of a devil, the priests and rulers dominated by overmastering cruelty and murderous hate; (2) I see in the Cross all their evil designs defeated, even in their success, and turned to the eternal good of man-

kind ; (3) I see as I stand there always this great lesson, that mankind can only be saved from its unutterable sins and its seemingly incurable follies by suffering, by agony and sorrow, and in this suffering God Himself is involved, for He bears all the shame and horror of man's sin in His own heart ; (4) I see there, moreover, the *strictly limited power of death*, how its dominion is broken, how life, that is in God's keeping, survives the shock and change of it, and that it cannot break the union which God creates, (5) I see

Finally, through all the sorrow and tragedy of Calvary, I see shining and transfiguring it all, the eternal and indestructible love of God, which will never depart from man, and from which the soul which hopes in Him is never separated by life or by death.

I take those two things, brethren, the love of God and the salvation of the race by suffering, as permanent facts, and I declare my belief that the one is never indifferent to the other, but abides and works through it all. It seems often and often in the history of the world that if men will have their wicked way they must, and their wickedness must work itself out to its full consequences—consequences in which the innocent are always involved, and which are overruled by God for the ultimate good of men. Yet

do I feel that it is our business to prevent wickedness and to put it down, to destroy the works of the devil wheresoever possible and by such means as God will allow.

Here I express my own hope and belief that out of this time of unparalleled suffering and anguish into which the world has been plunged by the jealousies and hatreds of men, there will come a permanent good for the nations.

But I venture to go farther than this. I venture to affirm that, sacred a place as Calvary is, we are not to stop there. Even the Cross of our Lord is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, and the end is God Himself. "He hath reconciled us to Himself," says St. Paul, "by the death of His Son." And the value of the Cross of Christ is that it helps us to our true place in God. It provides the way to the Father. The place from which to view all the convulsion and evils of these times is the place of communion with God. You know what Keble says :

"He who sees God's face may brook
On the dark face of sin to look."

Even his own sin, his treachery and foulness and folly, for ^{he} these he will see the love that will punish and which can forgive, and the power that can overcome and the righteousness that

will destroy. He may dare to look also on the dark face of sorrow with the feeling that God in some mysterious way is bearing it with him. And there from that place, as I think you will find in the history, a man may see clearly the everlasting and unslumbering righteousness of God, His holy indignation against the horror and infamy of sin, and the great fact that justice will be done, and that somewhere and somehow recompense will come to all who have suffered and to those who have made them suffer.

My dear brethren, what I need to feel to-day is that the righteousness of God is not changed by the wickedness of men; that His goodness abides amidst all human evil, and His love remains unaltered in the midst of all the hatreds and spites of men; that He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows. I need that revelation—not that I may luxuriate in it, but that I may be strengthened by it to bear my part, to endure and to suffer patiently and to fight and strive bravely, and to aid the bringing in of that time for which, surely, the whole creation waits and cries, when the God of righteousness and love shall reign in all lands and in all hearts, and men shall turn from their follies and sins and crimes with penitent and obedient hearts to Him.

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